



WEAPONS OF THE SAMURAI

STEPHEN TURNBULL





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INTRODUCTION

An incident of single combat using a mixture of edged weapons is shown in this detail from the Gosannen War Scroll. The man on the ground has been felled from his wounded horse and tries to defend himself using his sword. An arrow protrudes from the horse's belly. One arrow remains in the quiver of the assailant, who thrusts at the samurai on the ground using his *naginata*.

In the year 1609 a veteran samurai called Ono Shigeyuki died peacefully of old age. Shigeyuki's record of service as a retainer of the Tachibana family in battles that included Ulsan and Sekigahara notes that he fought in 22 major encounters and over 40 minor skirmishes. During these actions he both used and suffered from the entire range of weapons available to the samurai, sustaining wounds in 67 places on his body. Five of the wounds were from bullets, seven were from arrows and no fewer than 55 were inflicted by edged weapons, one of which had come very near to removing his right arm (Miike Historical Society 2017: 1).

We may assume that throughout his long career Ono Shigeyuki made extensive use of his *katana*, the legendary sword of Japan once described by *shōgun* Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) as 'the soul of the samurai'. That statement may have been true as far as the *katana*'s symbolism was concerned, but the sword was never the samurai's weapon of first choice in the grim reality of the Japanese battlefield. His primary armaments – bows, spears, other edged weapons and (to a lesser extent) firearms – may never have acquired the legendary status of the *katana*, yet it was through their use that battles were largely won. In other words, the samurai carried a complex 'toolkit' of weapons to use when the occasion was appropriate.

The typology and design of the weapons of the samurai changed considerably as the centuries went by, as is attested by numerous written sources, which range from personal diaries written by eyewitnesses to the heroic *gunkimono* (war tales) compiled for participating samurai leaders long after the events they describe had taken place. It is important, however, to note that the names used to identify the weapons in these sources are sometimes confusing. To give but one example: the combination of the characters for 'long' and 'sword' sometimes means not a long-bladed sword but a weapon on a long shaft such as a *naginata* (glaive).



A useful correction to this ambiguity is provided by contemporary illustrations, in which both the weapons themselves and the wounds they inflicted are shown in remarkable detail. Most of these works of art were produced some time after the events they represent, so conclusions must only be drawn about the weapons as they existed at the time of each work's creation, not the date of the event depicted. If this is allowed for, the painted scrolls produced from the 13th century onwards and the decorative screens that became fashionable during the early 17th century are among the best guides to what samurai weapons really looked like and how they were used. Interpretations from artwork only become problematic with certain 19th-century prints in which the depiction of weapons and armour can be very stylized. Otherwise, the combination of surviving specimens and the written and pictorial sources allow us to recreate a reasonable record of the evolution of the weapons of the samurai.

Identification of the users of these weapons can be almost as problematic as the weapons' typology. This book's title may imply that it is only concerned with the armaments of aristocratic warriors, as the samurai are commonly understood, but this is not so, because the period the book covers spans seven centuries (AD 900 to 1600), during which time the definition of the word 'samurai' changed considerably.

As a warrior who live during the Sengoku Period (the 'Age of Warring States' that is roughly coterminous with the 16th century)

Katagiri Katsumoto (1556–1615), who became one of the 'Seven Spears' of Shizugatake at the famous battle in 1583, is shown here using his *yari* from a horse as a stabbing weapon like a lance against a dismounted enemy samurai. During the Sengoku Period the *yari* was the samurai's preferred weapon.

our hero Ono Shigeyuki would have been proud to be called a samurai, and would have been very surprised if he had ever discovered that his illustrious ancestors, whose achievements Shigeyuki would have wished to emulate, had a very different understanding of the word's meaning. Someone of Shigeyuki's status who fought during the Gempei War (1180–85) would probably have been puzzled, not to say offended, if anyone referred to him as a samurai. The reason was not simply that the word was derived from a verb meaning 'to serve' and had once denoted a domestic servant, because by the 12th century the title had already acquired the specifically military meaning it has today. The truth was that until the early 15th century the word 'samurai' still retained the implication of subservience to someone else, so that the warriors called samurai who fought during the Gempei War were followers of an elite class who owned lands and had important family connections. Those leaders rode horses and were skilled archers. During the 13th century such individuals became known as *gokenin* ('honourable houseman'), whose elite status derived not only from their skills at warfare but also from their ownership of the patches of land granted by the *shōgun* and from which they took their surnames. *Gokenin* expected loyalty from the non-landowning samurai who followed them into battle and fought on foot, sometimes with bows but normally with edged weapons. It is this group – often mistakenly referred to only as foot soldiers – who were the actual 'samurai' at that time. They were nevertheless able to rise in society because of good service and the rewards that followed, so their status was analogous to the European squires who served noble knights.

The above distinction in nomenclature persisted until the Sengoku Period, which was an age of strife but also one of opportunity when power, status and wealth were all up for grabs. As titles and even pedigrees became meaningless the word 'samurai' acquired a new and wider significance that took in the former leaders as well as their followers. In these disordered times all classes of society were armed to the teeth: the *daimyō* (rich landowners; literally 'big names'), their ambitious followers, the fanatical adherents of religious groups, the opportunistic peasants who took up arms to become *ashigaru* (foot soldiers; literally the 'light feet') and a wide intermediate range of part-time fighters and farmers known generally as *jizamurai* (local samurai who were lords of smaller domains).

With the emergence of a time of established peace under the Tokugawa family, who consolidated their rule from 1615 onwards, the word 'samurai' achieved its definitive meaning as a fighting man whose duties were totally separate from carrying out any other sort of activity such as farming or trade. The *ashigaru* were now recognized as the lower ranks of the samurai class, so once again in Japanese history we find men called samurai fighting on foot armed with edged weapons. This book, therefore, is about the weapons used by all Japanese warriors between the 10th and 17th centuries, most of whom were called samurai at one time or another.



DEVELOPMENT

Arming the samurai

The weapons used by the first warriors to be called samurai would change very little between the 10th and 12th centuries, and one of the earliest and most reliable pictorial sources for this period is the well-known *Heiji monogatari emaki* (Tale of Heiji Scroll), which was painted during the second half of the 13th century to illustrate the fighting that took place during the Heiji Incident in Kyoto in 1160. Three weapons predominate in the street fighting that was characteristic of the short-lived rebellion: the bow, the sword and the *naginata*, a selection that corresponds very closely to contemporary written descriptions. The near-contemporary *Mōko shūrai ekotoba* (Mongol Invasion Scroll), painted very soon after the eponymous event in 1274 for one of the participants in the battle to help in his claim for a reward, places more emphasis on the use of mounted archers, which is appropriate for the more open terrain where the fighting against the Mongols took place, but it also shows some interesting close-combat weapons and the use of polearms including a *kumade* (literally ‘bear paw’; clawed rake). Several 14th-century scrolls show weapons that are almost identical, so *naginata* are wielded freely by lower-class samurai while arrows from elite mounted archers pierce limbs and throats. *Gosannen kassen ekotoba* (the scroll of the Gosannen or ‘Later Three Years’ War of 1083–87) adds rocks to the list of missile weapons, dropped by the defenders during attacks on their wooden fortresses.

This detail from the Gosannen War Scroll shows a mounted archer delivering an arrow into the side of an unfortunate victim. Note how the bow has rotated in the archer’s left hand after the arrow has been loosed off.

Overall, one sees little further development in samurai weapons or fighting techniques during the long Nambokuchō Wars (1336–92), the conflict between two competing imperial dynasties. One notable change, however, was the re-adoption of straight-bladed spears (abandoned in about the 9th century), which made an appearance alongside the curved *naginata*. Bows were also increasingly wielded by



Hashiba (Toyotomi) Hideyoshi is shown here as a young general in the service of Oda Nobunaga. He is witnessing close combat between samurai using swords and spears.

samurai on foot in *nobushi* (skirmisher) operations. The fascinating *Jūnirui kassen emaki* (Twelve Animals' War Scroll) of the late 14th century, which amusingly depicts the animals of the Chinese zodiac fighting a battle, shows the protagonists in contemporary armour and armed with a multitude of highly detailed samurai weapons including two very fierce-looking *ōdachi* (extra-long swords) and a number of hand-held striking weapons.

The beginning of the 15th century saw a continuation of fighting in spite of the peaceful settlement of the Nambokuchō Wars in 1392. The focus was now on the authority (or lack of it) exercised by the *shōgun*, which served as a curtain-raiser for the Ōnin War (1467–77), two important characteristics of which would be the use of organized groups of samurai spearmen rather than their deployment as individual warriors, and the recruitment of the first *ashigaru*, whose presence swelled the numbers of an army when they were not acting as looting mobs.

The first European-style firearms, known to the Japanese as *teppō*, arrived in Japan around the year 1543 when two arquebuses were brought by Portuguese traders, although additional routes of transmission are likely to have existed. These weapons were the lighter type of firearms that were fired by dropping a lighted match on to an open touch hole, hence their alternative name 'matchlocks'. It was not long before *gunkimono* were describing their usage and pictorial sources were showing them in action, for which the best illustrations are to be found on the elaborately painted folding screens from the late 16th century onwards. The well-known example depicting the battle of

Nagashino in 1575 shows the use of *teppō* to bring down the Takeda mounted samurai. By this time spears had largely replaced bows as the mounted men's own weapon of choice, so we see ranks of samurai fighting on horseback and on foot with spears beside organized squads of *ashigaru* spearmen, archers and arquebusiers.

YUMI: THE JAPANESE BOW

The *yumi* (bow) was the key weapon of the early samurai, and was very different in construction from the other types of bows used in continental East Asia. On the Asiatic mainland the predominant variety was the composite bow, whereby wood was combined with layers of horn or animal tendon. This mode of construction produced a bow that was considerably recurved, so when it was strung against the curve it required a very powerful pull to draw it. The Japanese made no use of animal products in their bows; in fact the earliest bows of all were made from a single piece of wood. The most powerful of these simple *yumi* were artificially recurved using steam but, judging by the evidence from the picture scrolls showing unstrung bows, many were straight and had no natural curve at all.

Compound bows, i.e. bows that were made from different layers of various types of wood, appear in Japan from around the 12th century onwards and were produced by adding a layer of bamboo to the bow's outside face. By the beginning of the 13th century a second layer was added to the nearside. Two centuries later a further two layers were added, one on each side, thus completely encasing the wooden core. All these types of bow, including the simple non-compound bow, were bound round with rattan to aid adhesion and lacquered all over to guard against the entry of moisture. These processes also added to the overall strength and power of the *yumi*.

The strength of a Japanese bow was expressed in terms of the number of men required to string it, and pictures exist of three or even five men bracing themselves against a tree trunk to curve a bow for stringing, although any bow requiring five men would be almost impossible to draw. A three-man bow is shown being curved in one 14th-century scroll, and this probably represents the realistic limit. The absence of the layers of horn found in composite bows meant that the strength of a Japanese bow was considerably less in relation to its length. To compensate for this, Japanese bows were designed to be very long, in some cases up to 2.5m, which would have made them difficult to use had it not been for the uniquely Japanese practice of placing the hand grip one-third of the way up the shaft rather than in the middle. This not only made the bow easier to use from horseback, but also ensured that it could be better controlled because the holding hand would be at one of the two points along the shaft where the natural oscillation of a loosed bow was at its least pronounced. There is some evidence that a few Japanese bows during the 14th century had small metal brackets at the hand level to support the arrows, but normally this would be done only by the archer's hand.

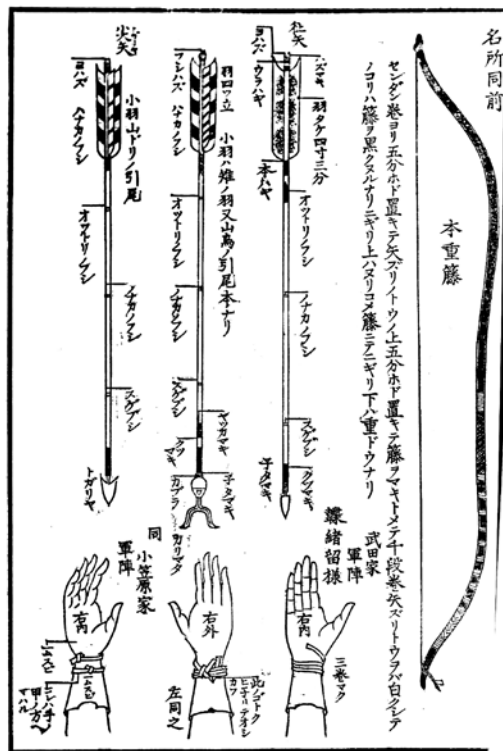


ABOVE LEFT

The young samurai Takeda Nobukatsu (1567–82) stringing his bow. Nobukatsu was the grandson of Takeda Shingen and was killed along with his father Katsuyori when their provinces were invaded by Oda Nobunaga in 1582. The typical Japanese *yumi* would have required more than one person to string it.

ABOVE RIGHT

Archery equipment, showing a bow, archers' gloves and three popular types of arrow. From left to right the arrowheads are a *watakuri* ('flesh-tearer'), a *karimata* (forked) mounted behind a whistling bulb, and a *makino* (short penetrating head).



Bowstrings were made of plant fibre, usually hemp or ramie, coated with wax to give a hard, smooth surface. A wooden reel suspended from a samurai's belt held a spare bowstring. A considerable technology also existed with respect to the design and use of arrows, which were always made from bamboo. The nock was cut just above a node for strength, and three or four feathers were fitted. The length of an arrow was measured in terms of *issoku* (hand spans) and *mitsu buse* (three-finger widths). The longest and heaviest arrows used in battle were known as *jūsanzoku-mitsu-buse*, i.e. 'arrows of 13 spans and three fingers'.

The major difference between the types of arrows lay in the shapes of their heads, which can be divided into three broad categories: narrow, broad and forked. The first category was composed of the 'bodkin' types, which were often of square cross-section. Their intended purpose was deep penetration, even through armour if they were loosed at close-enough range. The *makino* and *yanaba* varieties were like small spearheads, and it is this type that is probably indicated when a *gunkimono* author writes of arrows passing clean through their victims. The *nomine* was a heavier steel arrowhead, chisel-shaped and 8 *sun* (24.2cm) in length.

The broader arrowheads were usually leaf-shaped and could be barbed, e.g. the *watakuri* type. This was a 'flesh-tearer' that would cause a nasty hole when it was extracted from a wound. Many broad arrowheads that can be seen in museums are highly decorated with pierced designs. The *karimata* (forked) arrowheads resembled an open pair of scissors, the biggest being 6 *sun* (18.2cm) in width and 6 *sun* in depth. Their shape simply increased the chances of the arrow hitting something on impact, as

In some examples a *karimata* arrowhead is mounted in front of a wooden bulb to produce an aggressive version of the *kabura ya* (signalling arrow). The characteristic whistling sound the arrow produced came from the air rushing through a perforated wooden arrowhead; a device made from sections of magnolia or holly wood glued together and pierced with square holes like a whistle. This was the weapon traditionally used to signal the start of a battle by summoning the *kami* (deities) to pay attention to the deeds of valour that were about to take place.

Arrows were stored in a quiver called an *ebira*, which was like a small open basket in which the arrowheads rested. The shafts were tied loosely together with a cord. Around the time of the Gempei War, fully enclosed quivers called *utsubo* were introduced for hunting or ceremonial purposes

A selection of arrowhead types. On the left are two sizes of penetrating heads that resemble small spearheads. Two leaf-shaped broad arrowheads show some applied decoration. The one on the left has a pierced design in the shape of the Tokugawa *mon* (badge). The two smaller forked arrowheads are probably intended for hunting, and contrast markedly with the very large scissors-like example in the foreground.



Here is a very neat display of the three general types of arrowhead – narrow, broad and forked – set out on either side of an *utsubo* type of quiver, the latter covered with fur. Originally designed for hunting, the enclosed *utsubo* kept the arrows dry in rainy conditions and was readily adopted for use in battle.



and were deployed in battle from the 14th century onwards when it was realized that they kept the arrows safe from rain. Both types of quiver were tied securely to the samurai's belt, and the feathered arrows were withdrawn by lifting them clear of the quiver and pulling them downwards. Different types of arrow would be stacked within the quiver in pre-arranged positions, normally 25 arrows arranged in a square, so that the chosen type could be withdrawn with ease. Traditionally, the *kabura ya* would be located in one outer corner of the stack. Extra arrows were carried in other quivers by samurai attendants, so that a high-ranking samurai could have a supply of up to 150 arrows ready for his bow.

ŌDACHI AND NODACHI: EXTRA-LONG SWORDS

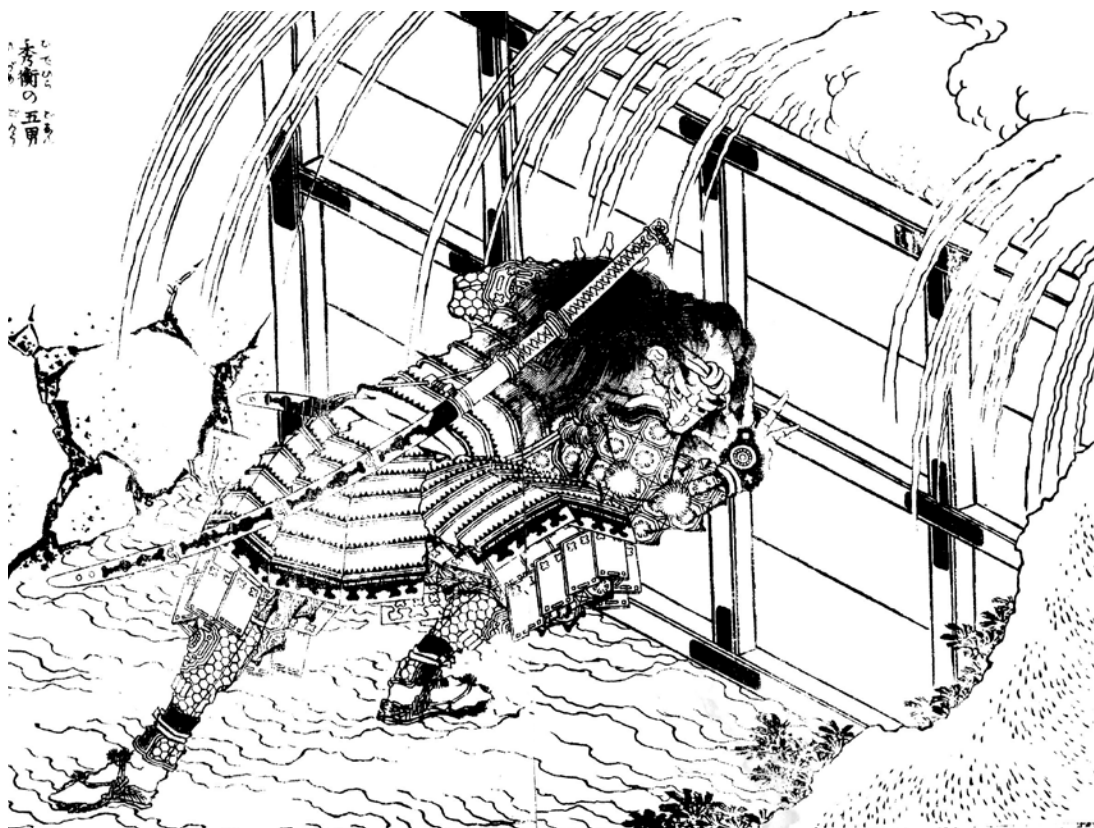
No samurai would ever be without a sword, and in addition to the *tachi*, *katana* and *wakizashi* there existed a considerable armoury of extra-long 'great swords'. In illustrations the length of their blades is noticeably greater than the normal-sized swords worn at the samurai's belt. There is

also a considerable overlap between the blade lengths of these weapons and those of the polearms that were intended for cutting rather than stabbing, such as the *naginata*. Some of these extra-long swords were longer than *naginata* when the measurements took in both their shafts and their handles.

The two names most frequently encountered for extra-long swords are *ōdachi* (literally ‘large *tachi*’) and *nodachi* (‘field swords’), the latter a term that Sasama believes was introduced during the 14th century because they were used in battles in the open where they could be swung most freely (Sasama 1968: 510–11). Some *ōdachi* were only sharpened toward the end of the blade, leaving the half near the hilt rounded like a clamshell so that it could be used to bludgeon an opponent to death (Conlan 2003: 60). Not many *ōdachi* have survived in their original form because many were cut down in size to make *katana* when fashions changed. Some enormously long examples still exist in shrine collections, but those were made only as votive offerings, never for use in battle.

The cut-off point between a *tachi* and an *ōdachi* would appear to be a blade length of over 3 *shaku* (90.9cm), although swords with blades longer than this are sometimes referred to quite casually as ‘long swords’ rather than being identified as a different weapon type. Fortunately, their length is sometimes specified in a description to demonstrate the prowess of the warrior using it, and Sasama gives several examples from

A samurai wearing a long *nodachi* (also known as *ōdachi*) across his back. The varieties that just exceeded the length of a normal *tachi* might well be worn at the samurai’s belt, but the large *ōdachi* could only be carried across the shoulders as in this example.



gunkimono. In *Heike Monogatari* (Tale of the Heike) there is a reference to an *ōdachi* of 3 *shaku* 5 *sun* (106.1cm) and in *Gempei Seisui ki* (Record of the Rise and Fall of the Minamoto and Taira) there is one of 3 *shaku* 6 *sun* (109.1cm). These are just beyond the limit for a normal *tachi*, but in the 14th-century *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of the Great Pacification), which covers the period of the time when *ōdachi* were most frequently used, there is one of 5 *shaku* 3 *sun* (160.6cm), and the *nodachi* shown on the Twelve Animals' War Scroll clearly has a blade as long as its owner is tall. For the Ōnin War period, *Ōnin ki* (Chronicle of the Ōnin War) notes one of 7 *shaku* 3 *sun* (221.2cm). During the Sengoku Period, when their use was declining, *Hōjō Godai ki* (Chronicle of Five Generations of the Hōjō Family), the chronicle of the Hōjō family of the early 16th century, mentions an *ōdachi* of 5 *shaku* 8 *sun* (175.7cm) (Sasama 1968: 510).

When not in action the longer versions of *ōdachi* are shown on scrolls as being held in one hand or slung by cords around the shoulder and worn on the back, unless of course a high-ranking samurai has a weapon-bearer to carry one for him until the moment of use. The Twelve Animals' War Scroll shows a warrior running along holding a *nodachi* in his left hand. The shorter versions of the *ōdachi* and *nodachi* may also appear at a samurai's waist like a *tachi*, although that would have made drawing the weapon more difficult.

NAGINATA: THE JAPANESE GLAIVE

The conscript armies sent out to fight on the fringes of Japanese civilization during the Nara Period (710–94) were issued with straight spears, but the emerging samurai class demanded a polearm that allowed much freer movement for an individual warrior. The result was the *naginata*: a very versatile weapon with which one could beat, stab and slash one's opponent. Its name literally means 'reaping sword', and it was indeed with a sweeping action akin to cutting crops that these fearsome weapons were best employed. It is difficult to ascertain when they first appeared, because different words are used to identify them, but the first unambiguous mention dates from 1146 (Friday 2004: 86).

A typical *naginata* consisted of a blade with a pronounced curve mounted on to a stout wooden shaft, although unlike a spear a *naginata* shaft would not be of a circular cross-section. Instead it would be oval to reflect the difference in use between thrusting and sweeping. During the Nambokuchō Wars we find references to an extra-large *naginata* called, unsurprisingly, an *ōnaginata*, the prefix indicating a longer and heavier blade rather than a longer shaft. A lighter version of the *naginata* was known as a *konaginata* and had a more slender blade. A specimen mentioned in *Heike Monogatari* had a blade of 3 *shaku* 5 *sun* (106.1cm) (Sasama 1968: 497). A *naginata* fitted with a sword guard was called a *tsubatsuki-naginata*. The type called a *tsukushi-naginata* had the blade affixed externally to the shaft using an iron ring.



Minamoto no Yoshinaka (1154–84) and his famous warrior wife Tomoe Gozen (c.1157–c.1247) are shown here in a pair of statues. Tomoe Gozen holds a *naginata*. During the peaceful Edo Period the *naginata* was regarded as weapon for women, but for much of the time of Japan's civil wars it was the samurai's preferred shafted weapon until being largely replaced by the straight-bladed *yari*.

BELOW

On this detail from a hanging scroll in Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of History in Himeji City a samurai holds a *naginata*. Judging by the inclusion of a face mask it is intended to show a warrior from the 15th century, but the *naginata* was a very popular weapon right up to the later Sengoku Period, by which time it had largely been supplanted by the straight-bladed *yari*.





The blade shown here is a rare example of a *tsukushi-naginata*. Rather than having the tang of the blade sunk into the top of the shaft, the whole blade is secured from the side and affixed to the shaft with an iron ring.

This detail from the Priest Ippen Scroll shows a warrior monk holding the simplest version of a *bō*, which is a natural wooden club fastened from a tree branch to give a heavy striking end by incorporating part of the trunk. It resembles the traditional Irish club called a shillelagh.

THE NAGAMAKI

At first sight the *nagamaki* looks like a type of *naginata*, and it is often believed that they were derived from *naginata*. In fact a *nagamaki* is a variant on the *ōdachi*, and came into being because of the difficulty in wielding an *ōdachi* caused by the comparative shortness of its handle in relation to the blade length. Because of this, some warriors began wrapping the lower part of the blade (which had been left blunt-edged in many cases) in lengths of cord, thus extending the effective length of the handle. This produced the '*nakamaki nodachi*' i.e. 'a *nodachi* wrapped around its middle', which eventually became the term *nagamaki*. In time the handle was simply made longer, but it always remained a sword handle in terms of its design, never a polearm shaft, and was indeed used in a sword-like manner whereby the hands were kept in a fixed position rather than having the constant change of hand positions needed for polearms.

STRIKING WEAPONS AND HOOKED WEAPONS

There are a few accounts in the literature of Japanese warriors using weapons that are analogous to European maces or other weapons that delivered a blunt hammer-like blow. Pictures of different varieties of them appear in some of the oldest painted scrolls, although most of the implements shown are more likely to have been tools rather than





This lively detail from a painted screen depicting the siege of Hasedō (1600) shows a samurai charging into battle with his preferred weapon, which is a long and comparatively slender version of a *kanabō* or *kanasaibō* (wood-and-iron club). They were usually of octagonal or hexagonal cross-section at the striking end. On his back the rider wears an identifying *sashimono* (back flag) of a Shinto priest's *gohei* (prayer baton) made from gold-lacquered paper.

weapons. The *bō* (club) is a notable exception. If a single sword stroke could not stop or disarm an advancing opponent then one alternative would be to flatten him with these huge wood-and-iron clubs, and a number of different types existed to provide the Japanese equivalent of the mace. They make a remarkably frequent appearance on scrolls and prints, which emphasizes the fact that they were used in battle. According to Sasama they were a favourite of *aramusha* (literally ‘tough guys’) around the time of the Nambokuchō Wars (Sasama 2004: 126).

The *Ippen Shōnin emaki* (Priest Ippen Scroll) shows a warrior monk holding the simplest version of a *bō*, which is a natural wooden club fastened from a tree branch to give a heavy striking end by incorporating part of the tree trunk. It resembles the traditional Irish club called a shillelagh. The usual versions of the *bō* were carved from various types of wood and encased in iron strips to produce the *kanabō* or *kanasaibō* (wood-and-iron club). The shaped varieties were given an octagonal cross-section, and are best known in Japanese culture for being the weapons traditionally carried by the *oni* (demons) of Japanese mythology. Sasama notes the use of oak, *sugi* (Japanese cedar), mulberry

A very effective use of a three-pronged *kumade* (rake) is shown in this detail from an illustrated version of *Hōjō Godai ki*. Using only his left hand, a samurai has caught a fleeing enemy in his helmet bowl, and the picture suggests one of the *kumade*'s prongs has seized on to the *tehen*, the opening left at the top of some helmets where the constituent plates joined. The samurai's right hand is ready to bring his sword round to decapitate his victim.



and yew for the shafts (Sasama 2004: 126). They were usually studded with blunt-headed nails and some varieties have an iron ring at the ferrule. An illustration of a long and narrow version appears on the Hasedō Screen.

Axes (*masakari*, *ono* or *fuetsu*) have their own place in Japanese mythology, being the weapon associated with the hero Kintarō, but axes of any size are rarities on the samurai battlefield, although there are a

Polearms (opposite)

A popular weapon throughout most of samurai history, the *naginata* (1) was used to deliver sweeping strokes, for which the oval cross-section of the shaft provided a secure grip. This particular version dates from the 12th century and is based on an illustration on the Heiji Scroll.

The *ono* (2) was occasionally used in combat during the 14th century, according to *Taiheiki*. This example has a leather-wrapped shaft and an iron ferrule.

The *heitsui* (3), a wooden mallet with a massive head, would primarily be used as a tool for siege purposes, but could be adopted as a weapon when necessary.

The *kanasaibō* (4), the Japanese equivalent of the mace, was a large wooden club reinforced by iron strips and rounded nails. It had a heavy iron ring at its butt end and could be used to deliver a stunning blow.

The *tsukubō* (5) was a development from the polearms used in warfare to become a police weapon for apprehending

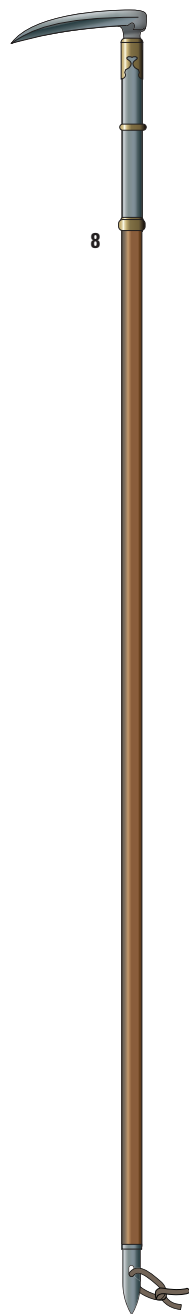
fleeing criminals. It had a heavy and complex spiked head on a plain wooden shaft.

The *tsuitō* (6) was a polearm designed to keep an opponent at bay using the curve of its crescent-shaped head and the rows of spikes. Otherwise it could be used for pulling.

A *kumade* (7), as depicted on the Mongol Invasion Scroll, would be used to pull an opponent from his horse using the three iron 'claws'. The chain allowed the assailant extra leverage if the shaft was damaged or cut through.

The *teikō* (8) was a simple polearm having the head of a *kama* (sickle). It could be used for pulling an opponent from his horse, but would be more effective if combined with a thrusting blade.

The *yari* (9) became the most popular battlefield weapon for samurai from the time of the Ōnin War onwards. This is the standard version for use from horseback, which is sometimes called a *mochi-yari* (held spear). It has a comparatively long blade in relation to the length of the shaft.





A selection of police weapons on display inside an old mansion in Kakunodate, Akita Prefecture. The top one is a reverse sickle used for keeping an assailant at bay. The middle one is the classic *tsukubō* or 'sleeve entangler' with its head of a mass of spikes to enable it (and its user) to hold on to a fleeing suspect. Both these examples have extra spikes along the top of the iron shaft. The lower implement is a variation of the usual *kumade*, but here the three prongs are mounted one on top of the other.

number of surviving written and pictorial references throughout the period covered by this book. An early example appears on *Kasuga Gongen genki e* (Scroll of the Miracles of Kasuga Gongen), being carried into battle, although it may well have been taken along with the intention of smashing down a gate. There are two references to axes in *Taiheiki* and a particularly rich display of axes and other objects appears on the Twelve Animals' War Scroll, where a particular item called a *tsuruhashi* (literally 'crane's bill') tempts the viewer into seeing the Japanese equivalent of the armour-breaking European war hammer. The *tsuruhashi*'s head consisted of a short curved spike, and some varieties had a hammer head on the reverse side. It could easily have smashed through Japanese armour, but the assailant would have had to be very close to his victim because the *tsuruhashi* had a short handle, so it is more likely to have been used as a tool. Another implement shown on the same scroll is the *teppyō*, a long *yari* that terminates in a short almost blunt spike. The *teppyō* was also a siege tool and was used for striking at wooden structures from a distance.

More authentically established as weapons are the pulling devices that have hooks, claws and side-projecting blades fitted on to the end of a shaft. One version was called the *kumade* and had three iron prongs, and

a later variation was the *ōkumade*, a large rake with five long iron claws. Samurai could be dragged from their horses for decapitation by using these rakes. The *kumade* shown on the Mongol Invasion Scroll has a long chain attached to the head so that it could be pulled back even if the shaft was cut. When similar hooks were attached to chains or ropes without any shaft they were called *uchikagi* and were only used as grappling irons on board ships.

Curved-bladed pulling devices consisted of half-crescent-shaped sickle-like blades on the ends of shafts and were called either *teikō*, or more simply just *kama* (sickles). They were used for tearing down defences but could also hook an enemy samurai to pull him from his horse for decapitation. The more elaborate *tsuitō* was a polearm on which the head was a full-crescent shape with the cutting edge facing away from the operator. When defending a castle from above the cutting edge was used; from below it acted as a hook. The *tsuitō* could also be used for clearing field defences. More complex hooked weapons appeared during the Edo Period (1603–1868) for use as police weapons to apprehend fleeing criminals. The *tsukubō* type had a complex spiked head and rows of spikes just below the head, hence its nickname ‘sleeve entangler’ (Sasama 2004: 128).

YARI: THE JAPANESE SPEAR

The spear has a long history in Japan and was the usual weapon for the Chinese-style conscript armies of the Nara Period. They are regularly encountered in the literature chronicling events after a battle when enemy heads were stuck on the ends of ancient *hoko* spear blades and paraded in triumph. Examples preserved from this time have shafts of up to 4m in length, and some have short crossed blades in addition to the long straight blade. These ‘infantry spears’ were

This detail from the Kasuga Gongen Scroll shows a badly wounded samurai applying pressure to a head wound caused by an arrow hit. Of particular interest is his polearm, which is a straight spear bearing a short curved blade. The blade is too short for the weapon to be called a *naginata*, and is probably a version of the ancient *hoko* spear. It also resembles the improvised *kikuchi-yari* that legend attributes to the Kikuchi family, who are said to have affixed *tantō* blades to bamboo poles.





This equestrian statue of Maeda Toshiie (1538–99) stands in the grounds of the Oyama Shrine in Kanazawa City and shows the young Toshiie when he served in Oda Nobunaga's mounted bodyguard unit. On his back he wears a *horo* (cloak) on a bamboo framework. His weapon is a *jūmonji yari* (a *yari* with a cross-shaped blade with two side blades).

weapons that eventually attained an almost unwieldy length and have been described in my previous works. Both these types and the shorter samurai versions were made in a similar way. The shaft was formed of a composite nature by gluing strips of bamboo or hard wood around a stout oak core. The entire shaft would be covered in lacquer and then thread was wound round part of its length to give a secure hand grip. The whole shaft was then lacquered again.

The blade of a *yari*, for which several types existed, had a very long tang that would sit deep and secure within the shaft, usually under a long metal collar, and was secured in place by a horizontal bamboo peg. A ring might be attached to the collar to allow a small identifying flag to be flown. Side-bladed versions of *yari* were common. A *kata-kami-yari* had one side blade of a crescent shape like a sickle, while a *jūmonji yari* had a cross-shaped blade with two side blades.

The usual samurai *yari* was sometimes called a *mochi-yari* (held spear) to distinguish it from the longer *ashigaru* weapon. The shaft would be about 3m long, and even though this was shorter than the

designed for thrusting from within dense ranks of foot soldiers, and the word '*hoko*' continues to appear in written sources until the early 13th century to describe any straight-bladed spear. *Hoko* appear occasionally on the early painted scrolls beside the more common *naginata*.

Hoko spears may be distinguished from the later type of spear called a *yari* by the fact that *hoko* spear blades were socketed to take the shafts that fitted tightly inside them while the hilts of the *yari* blades were sunk into their shafts. *Hoko* shafts were of circular cross-section and sometimes wrapped with metal or thread to provide a secure grip for the characteristically firm two-hand thrusting from within a tightly packed group of combatants on the battlefield. The later *yari* were used increasingly in long-shafted versions by the *ashigaru* weapon squads that were introduced from the 1560s onwards, but also achieved pre-eminence as the samurai's individual weapon of choice. They were therefore the most important samurai weapon from about 1540 onwards, by which time they had almost replaced the bow except in the case of very skilled mounted archers. Although the word '*yari*' is often translated as 'pike', I feel this gives the wrong impression, because only a few varieties of *yari* used during the Sengoku Period had anything like the length of a European pike, nor were they used in a similar manner.

The general word for a long spear was *naga-yari*, but a very long-shafted spear (the longest type of all) was a *naga e-yari*. The latter were the infantry



ashigaru ‘pike’, a much longer spear blade could often be attached. An interesting and authentic example of a *mochi-yari* is still preserved in Tokyo. Presented to Hattori Hanzō (1542–96) by Tokugawa Ieyasu, its original shaft length was 3.1m, and it had a long blade (now broken) of 1.27m. The total length of the weapon was therefore 4.38m, of which the blade made up just over one-quarter. Samurai operating on foot for reconnaissance purposes could have a shorter spear known as a *monomi-no-yari* (scout’s spear) for convenience of operation.

Honda Tadakatsu (1548–1610) was one of Tokugawa Ieyasu’s most loyal followers, and is shown on his statue at Okazaki Castle holding a typical samurai’s *mochi-yari*, the spear of medium length favoured by mounted samurai during the Sengoku Period.

HIYA: CHINESE-STYLE FIREARMS

The simplest of all missile weapons was the thrown stone, and there are many references throughout Japanese history to small stones or even heavy rocks being dropped from castle walls on to attackers’ heads. As a consequence there are many references in the literature to *ishikizu* (stone wounds) and while most of these incidents no doubt involved stones dropped by hand, others may be evidence for the deployment of a weapon the use of which has been almost totally ignored: the primitive Chinese-style firearm, which preceded the introduction of arquebuses to Japan by half a century.

One reason why the deployment of Chinese-style firearms has gone unnoticed is because the word normally used for them was *teppō*, the name that would be universally adopted for arquebuses. The word *teppō* originally comes from China, where gunpowder weapons had been known about for centuries. In 1274 devices called *teppō* had been responsible for the first gunpowder explosions ever heard in Japan; but on that occasion the word referred not to the means of delivery but to the projectiles themselves, which were exploding iron bombs launched from catapults by invading Mongols.

In 1466 the word '*teppō*' suddenly reappears in an entry in *Inryōken Nichiroku* (Inryōken's Diary), written by a Japanese monk, and this time it definitely means a Chinese-style firearm. The object under description had been brought to Kyoto by envoys from Japan's near neighbour, the then independent kingdom of Ryūkyū in the Ryūkyū Islands (modern-day Okinawa Prefecture). The diarist notes what he calls a *teppō* being fired during a visit by a Ryūkyūan envoy to the *shōgun* Ashikaga Yoshimasa in September 1466 and causing great surprise to those who witnessed the demonstration. The firearms were known on the Ryūkyū Islands as *hiya*, which literally (and somewhat unhelpfully) translates as 'fire arrow', and were probably discharged in Kyoto as a ceremonial salute (Tōma 1994: 124 & 140). Two years later, when the Ōnin War was in full swing, another diarist records what may be evidence of a *hiya* being used in warfare in Japan. He mentions something he calls a *hibō hisō* (flying projectile fire spear) being fired from a tower, although the expression 'fire spear' makes it more likely to have been a weapon called a fire-lance, a primitive device that threw out flames together with small projectiles (Needham 1986: 248–70).

Hiya consisted of a short barrel (or barrels) bearing a simple touch hole mounted in some way on to a long wooden stock, and the most popular type on the Ryūkyū Islands was triple-barrelled. There is enough evidence for the presence of some sort of firearm in Japan between 1468 and 1543 to indicate that firearms very like *hiya* were being used in battle by samurai long before the arrival of arquebuses.

A typical, if somewhat ornate, Japanese *teppō*. On the right of the stock is a brass serpentine linked to a spring which drops the serpentine when the trigger is pulled. The serpentine contained the end of a glowing and smouldering match, the rest of which would be wrapped around the stock of the weapon or the user's arm.

TEPPŌ: THE JAPANESE ARQUEBUS

The traditional view of the introduction of arquebuses to Japan is that they arrived in 1543 when Portuguese traders were shipwrecked



on the island of Tanegashima. It is now broadly accepted, however, that there were other routes of transmission in operation, probably controlled by pirates, and that arquebuses made in Southeast Asia were included alongside any European originals (Udagawa 2013: 21–28). The usual *teppō* was a small-calibre matchlock firearm that was normally light enough in weight to be fired without the aid of a rest. A ramrod was kept under the barrel within a solid-oak stock, which broadened towards its rear end to provide a secure hand grip. Shoulder rests were never developed in Japan. When the trigger was pulled an internal or external spring, depending upon the design, dropped the lighted match on to the touch hole to ignite the gunpowder and fire the shot. All Japanese *teppō* followed this basic design, the only major difference being in the size of the weapon, which was classified in terms of the weight of the shot in *monme*. This of course determined the diameter of the bore which, unlike in Europe, was standardized. One *monme* was equivalent to 3.75g, and the lightest *teppō* of all fired shots of between one and three *monme* (11.25g), although six *monme* (22.5g) was preferred because it was the most economical weight of shot in terms of lead and gunpowder. The weapons had an overall range of about 500m, with an effective killing range of 50–100m. The bullets could pierce a 3cm-thick wooden shield at up to 50m range, and a 2mm-thick iron plate (equivalent to a suit of armour) at 30m. One of the earliest surviving dateable examples of a *teppō* is owned by the Daitokuji in Kyoto. It bears the date of 1583 and has an overall length of 158.8cm. Its calibre is either five or six *monme* (18.75–22.5g) and the whole weapon weighs about 45kg.

The upper limit for hand-held *teppō* would appear to be the six-*monme* (22.5g) weapons, because beyond that weight some form of rest would normally be required. *Teppō* of up to ten *monme* (37.5g) were known as *mochi-zutsu* and were used by high-ranking warriors who had assistants to carry the weapons for them. Short-barrelled *teppō* with equally short fat stocks firing bullets of 30 *monme* (112.5g) could be cradled in the user's arms to fire with the aid of a supporting cord passing round the shoulders. Arquebuses of over 50 *monme* (187.5g) were known as *ōzutsu* and certainly required some form of rest. Those *ōzutsu* with even longer barrels were called *ōdeppō*, and were normally only fired from loopholes in castle walls.



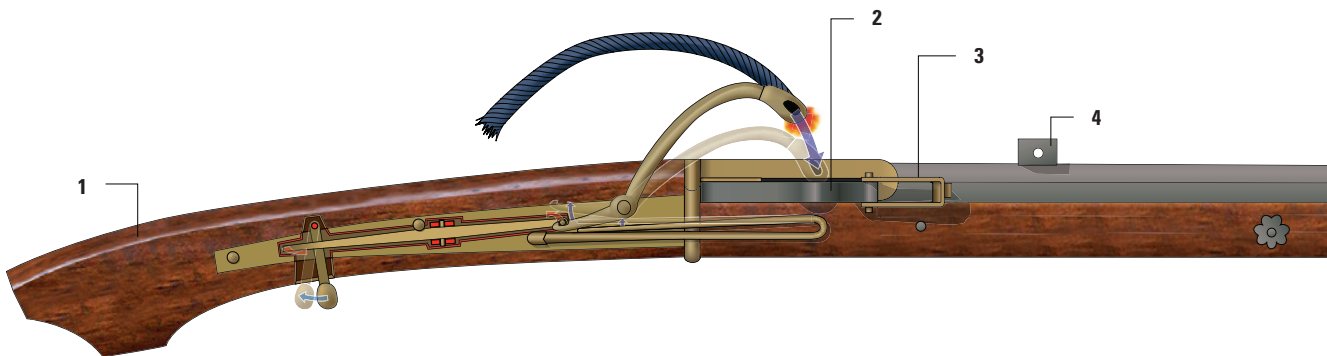
THE *TEPPŌ* EXPOSED

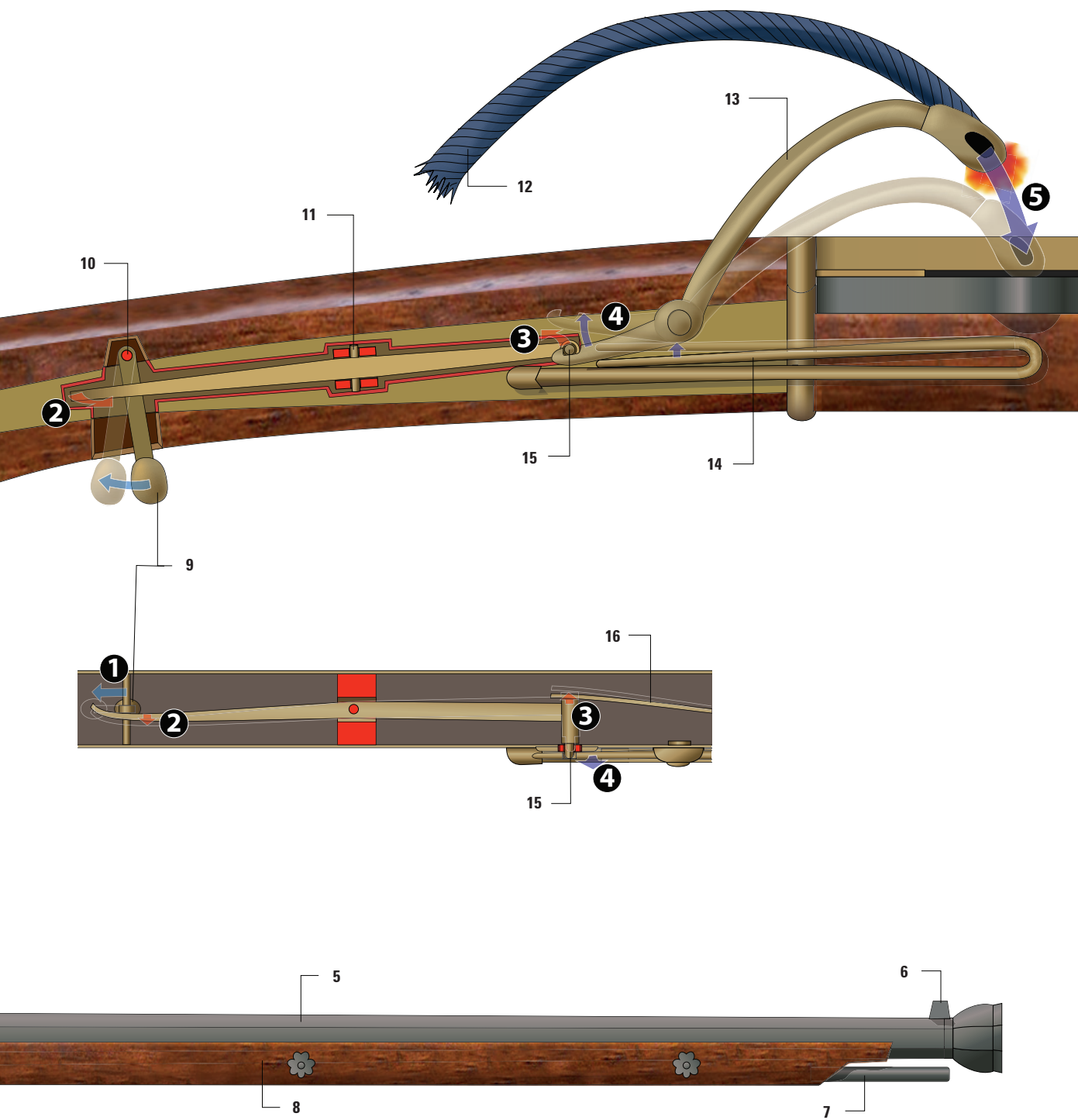
Japanese matchlock arquebus of the Sengoku Period

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Butt | 7. Ramrod | 13. Serpentine fire clamp |
| 2. Flash pan | 8. Stock | 14. Mainspring |
| 3. Flash-pan cover | 9. Trigger | 15. Sear pin |
| 4. Rear sight | 10. Trigger hinge | 16. Return spring |
| 5. Barrel | 11. Sear hinge | |
| 6. Front sight | 12. Cut slow match | |

FIRING SEQUENCE

- 1 The trigger is pulled back.
- 2 The sear, curved around the trigger bar at its rear end, rotates to the right.
- 3 The front end of the sear rotates to the left, pulling the sear pin into the weapon and releasing the serpentine fire clamp.
- 4 The mainspring forces up the rear end of the fire clamp.
- 5 The glowing cut slow match in the fire clamp rotates down to ignite the powder in the flash pan.







USE

Samurai weapons in combat

This fine equestrian statue depicts Yamauchi Kazutoyo (1545–1605), the *daimyō* of Kōchi Castle on the island of Shikoku. He carries a *mochi-yari*.

The challenge posed by this chapter will be to tease out the details of specific weapon usage from written descriptions that almost invariably involve several different weapons being deployed in succession or even at one and the same time. There was a time and a place for every item in the samurai's extensive armoury, both for his personal success as an individual warrior and as part of the group effort under the direction of a general on the battlefield. It is also important to note that in *gunkimono* the use of individual weaponry is often best described in situations that involve challenges to combat, but those encounters – so cherished by samurai legend – were by no means the norm. It is not unreasonable to envisage a samurai trying to identify a suitably high-ranking victim in the heat of battle by his expensive armour or his personal standard, but the issuing of challenges would have placed the challenger into a momentarily weak position in which he could be targeted by missile troops, so most opponents were probably anonymous until their severed heads were identified.

EDGED WEAPONS ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The sword in mass charges

In my book *Katana: The Samurai Sword* I dealt with sword use both on and off the battlefield. I shall not repeat those examples here. Instead, the descriptions of sword combat that follow will be limited to instances of fighting in which the sword was essentially just another element in the samurai's armoury, together with the special case of sword fighting on a large scale in a mass charge. The *katana* was usually the weapon of choice for such operations because of its ease of use, although the often-desperate



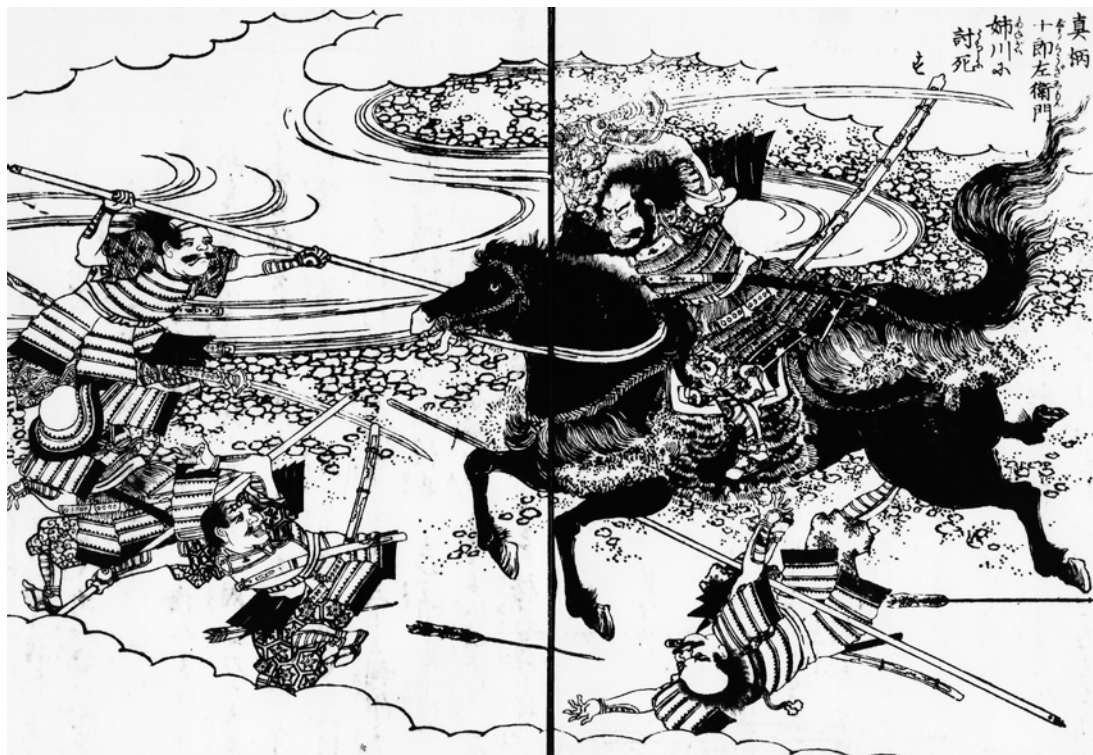
nature of the situation meant that a samurai would grab whatever weaponry came to hand. Most of the references concern armed sallies being delivered out of a castle gate to surprise the besiegers, as when the military commander Shibata Katsuie (1522–83) was confined inside Chōkōji Castle in 1570. All hope of relief seemed gone, so in a dramatic gesture he smashed the castle's water-storage jars and led his samurai out in a death-defying charge with their unsheathed blades gleaming. So vigorous was the impact of their charge that they scattered the besiegers and saved the castle.

It is interesting to note that the most effective response to a mass charge with Japanese edged weapons was devised by Spanish colonists on the Philippines. During the 1570s and 1580s they suffered a series of attacks from *wakō* (Japanese pirate gangs) who often used similar shock tactics. The defensive scheme the Spanish employed was to fire volleys of bullets and cannonballs at the oncoming waves of men from within the protection of fences or earthworks. One example of this response in action, during a raid on the Philippines by the Japanese *wakō* leader Taifusa in 1582, resulted in the charging Japanese force making several attempts but being beaten back with heavy casualties (Blair & Robertson 1903–09, Vol. 30: 274–75).

A good example of sword fighting on a large scale is its use in a mass charge, and the *katana* was usually the weapon of choice for such operations. In this book illustration the charge depicted is the advance by Hideyoshi's army along the ridge of Shizugatake in 1583, which is normally depicted with the samurai mounted on horses. Nevertheless, the use of spear and sword conveys the vigour of the situation.

The use of *ōdachi* and *nodachi*

I noted in *Katana: The Samurai Sword* that sword fighting from a horse was never easy because the normally two-handed *tachi* had to be used in



The classic example of *ōdachi* use is the devastation wrought at the battle of Anegawa in 1570 by Makara Jūrōzaemon. Some accounts have the weapon's length as 6 *shaku* (181.8cm) or even an unlikely 7 *shaku* 8 *sun* (236.3cm).

one hand, but that this disadvantage was somewhat mitigated by the samurai's elevated position and the momentum of his horse. The curvature of the *tachi*'s blade allowed the cutting edge to slice into an opponent along a small area that would open up to cut through to the bone as the momentum of the swing continued. If the blade was a good one the results could be devastating, as shown by an incident in *Wani Gundan* (War Chronicle of the Wani Family), the *gunkimono* about the fall of Tanaka Castle in 1587. Tsuda Yohei, a high-ranking mounted samurai in Hideyoshi's army hoping for the honour of taking a prestigious head, confronted Wani Jinki, the brother of the castle's commander. Jinki slashed back at Yohei with his sword and cut his assailant almost in two from the peak of his helmet to his groin (Kumamoto 2000: 65).

Similar considerations applied to the extra-long *ōdachi* and *nodachi*, which were most usefully employed by warriors on foot for bringing down horses. It is difficult to envisage how they could be used by a horseman at full gallop because the length of these weapons made them very top-heavy. We may therefore envisage that if they were used from horseback it would only be when the mounted samurai was engaged in a *mêlée* after the initial charge or exchange of arrows. One of his weapon carriers would swap his master's spear for an *ōdachi*, and the samurai would now fight with it while two grooms steadied his horse for him.

There are, however, several descriptions in the literature of *ōdachi* being held by samurai in one hand. The context may merely indicate that the weapons in question were swords of just above *tachi* size, although some particularly strong samurai could have developed unique skills for

the deployment of the longer examples. It is known that *ōdachi* could be given extra stability when used from the saddle by having a tying cord fastened around the samurai's sword arm at the elbow, thereby making the forearm an extension of the sword's handle. The skilled use of an *ōdachi* is described in *Taiheiki* as follows:

A famous warrior called Saji Magorō, from a powerful family in the province of Tamba, brought his horse up in front of the west gate and with his five *shaku 3 sun ōdachi*, the like of which has never been seen before, easily slashed into the abdomens of three men of the Mountain Gate. He then pushed his sword against the door of the gate to rectify the slight bend it had received. (*Taiheiki* 8)

Fifty years later, in 1399, we encounter in *Ōei ki* (the Chronicle of the Ōei Rebellion) an *ōdachi* being used against *shōgun* Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408). On learning that his master Ōuchi Yoshihiro (1356–99) had committed suicide, Sugi Bungo-no-Kami, who was defending the south side of the city,

... cut his way into the midst of the great enemy in the northern lines, confronting and cutting down six of the enemy on the way. He was a very strong man who used an *ōdachi*, and without any thought for his own life among the madness of death he discarded his *tachi* and began his attack, and over 200 horsemen retreated about 2 *chō* [218m] as if they were leaves scattered by a storm. Yamana Nyūdō abandoned his own *tachi*, and moved towards Bungo-no-Kami in order to engage

BELOW LEFT

A simple book illustration showing the relative size and mode of wearing for the three sizes of sword: the *wakizashi* (short companion sword), the *tachi* or *katana* (standard fighting swords) and the *ōdachi* or *nodachi* (extra-long swords).

BELOW RIGHT

A different take on the demise of Makara Jūrōzaemon at the battle of Anegawa appears on this 19th-century print. His costume is romanticized, but the size of the scabbard and blade emphasize the extreme length of an *ōdachi*.



with him. At this, Bungo did not miss the opportunity and thrust at him with his long sword, which pierced him through his breastplate and out at the rear. Nyūdō tried to pull Bungo towards him in order to stab him to death, but Bungo had ruled that out by transfixing him with his long sword and, after staggering back about three metres, he died where he stood. (Hanawa 1912: 302–03)

The classic example of *ōdachi* use is recounted in the exploits of the giant samurai Makara Jūrōzaemon (1536–70), who lopped off limbs and heads as he swung his monstrous weapon at the battle of Anegawa in 1570. The normal version of the story claims that he used his *ōdachi* in only one hand and that it took four enemy samurai to defeat him. The first three strokes from his *ōdachi* cut one assailant on the thigh, then knocked the helmet off his head and sliced through his spear.

The actual length of Makara Jūrōzaemon's *ōdachi* depends on which version of the story one reads. The usual length given is 5 *shaku* 3 *sun* (160.6cm), which is long enough for an *ōdachi*'s blade to be of practical use, but Suzuki points out that other accounts have it as 6 *shaku* (181.8cm) or even an unlikely 7 *shaku* 8 *sun* (236.3cm) (Suzuki 2000b: 128). The *Mikawa Gofudo ki* (Mikawa Stories) account of the battle of Anegawa makes no reference to the length of the weapon. Makara Jūrōzaemon's son Naomoto, who fought and died at his father's side, wielded a shorter *ōdachi* of 4 *shaku* 3 *sun* (130.3cm) in length. The older man was finally brought down when another enemy samurai managed to hook one of the cross blades of his *yari* under his armour, bringing Makara Jūrōzaemon to the ground to be decapitated (Mitsueda 1977: 84–85).

***Naginata* fighting in fact and fantasy**

When using a *naginata* the momentum of the slicing stroke would have required a return swing to bring the blade back in a new direction from which a further blow could be delivered. As the heavy iron ferrule at the base of a *naginata* shaft was also capable of dealing a significant blow, the overall movement of the weapon in the hands of a skilled operator would be a series of rotations. It is these rapid changes of cutting direction that probably gave rise to the idea that the supreme use of a *naginata* by an expert was to whirl it quickly in one continuous direction like a spinning water wheel. If the whirling technique was performed speedily enough, legends claimed, it could even enable the user to deflect volleys of arrows fired at him. The best-known instance of this alleged technique being used appears in the *Heike Monogatari* account of the battle of Uji in 1180, where *sōhei* (warrior monks) from the temple of Miidera mounted the broken bridge to defy the oncoming samurai. One monk called Tajima earned himself the nickname of 'the arrow cutter' because he whirled his *naginata* to deflect the shafts heading straight for him (Sadler 1921: 194). *Taiheiki* also tells of warrior monks 'swinging round their more than 4 *shaku*-long *naginata* like water wheels' (*Taiheiki* 8), so how authentic was the practice of whirling a *naginata*?



It is theoretically possible that a rapidly rotating *naginata* could knock some oncoming arrows to one side, but surely not all of them, and merely to whirl a *naginata* rather than use it for the deadly purpose for which it was intended sounds like an inefficient way of fighting. There is, however, a tantalizing pictorial representation of the whirling technique on a scroll owned by the temple of Ishiyamadera in which a young monk is shown whirling a *naginata* very rapidly. The painting has been done very carefully to show that the weapon is indeed rotating like a propeller. Far from being proof of the technique, however, the scene is not a battlefield. Instead, the written description of the picture in a modern book uses the expression ‘frolicking’ to explain what the monks are doing, and a close examination of the scroll shows that he is one of a group of novice monks who are amusing themselves. Two are peering through the fence to spy on the pious monks inside the temple while two others are playing with their *naginata*. The one who is whirling his weapon (his other hand is clutching his trousers!) has aroused mock fear in his opponent and provoked laughter among the onlookers. The technique shown is therefore little more than a version of baton twirling, not a martial-arts move (Ishiyamadera 1997: 12).

The 17th-century *Taikō ki* (Chronicles of the Taiko; a romanticized biography of Hideyoshi) tells of a samurai called Reizei Motomitsu wielding his *naginata* like a water wheel at the siege of Ulsan in 1598 and slaying 15 or 16 of the enemy, but this description may safely be dismissed

ABOVE LEFT

One of the most celebrated users of a *naginata* in *Taiheiki* is Yagi Nyūdō Raigen, who climbed on top of a half-demolished bridge at the battle of Yamazaki in 1333. When the bridge collapsed, plunging Raigen into the river, he used his *naginata* as a makeshift paddle to propel himself to the riverbank on a floating wooden shield.

ABOVE RIGHT

A life-size diorama in the museum of the Kikuchi Shrine (Kikuchi City, Kumamoto Prefecture) showing a typical lower-class samurai of the 14th century. He is armed with a sword and a long-shafted *naginata*.

as poetic homage to the supposed glories of centuries past, and is in fact merely describing rapid fighting (Yoshida 1979: 182). Whirling the *naginata* is nevertheless a persistent motif in samurai culture, and the supposed use of swords to deflect arrows has also been depicted in some prints.

A more realistic use of a *naginata* in combat occurred during the battle of Yamazaki in 1333, which was fought partly across a half-demolished bridge. Acknowledging the cherished precedent of Tajima the Arrow-Cutter, *Taiheiki* describes how Yagi Nyūdō Raigen mounted the beams of the bridge and swung his *naginata* against the enemy. Unfortunately for Raigen the bridge soon collapsed, plunging himself and hundreds of other samurai into the river. Raigen was a strong swimmer, however, and clambered on to a wooden shield which he then used as a raft, propelling himself to the shore by using his *naginata* as a makeshift paddle (*Taiheiki* 14).

This mounted samurai holds what appears to be a *naginata*, but it could be a *nagamaki*. There are very few definite illustrations of *nagamaki*, which were derived from long swords for which the handle was extended by having the blade wrapped around its lower section to extend the grip and give more balance.

The elusive *nagamaki*

Because the *nagamaki* developed from a *nodachi* there are fewer records of its use than for *naginata*. In *Taikō ki* there is a reference to 50 men armed with *nagamaki* with either 3 *shaku* (90.9cm) blades or 4 *shaku* (121.2cm) handles (Sasama 1968: 512). The Uesugi family described the

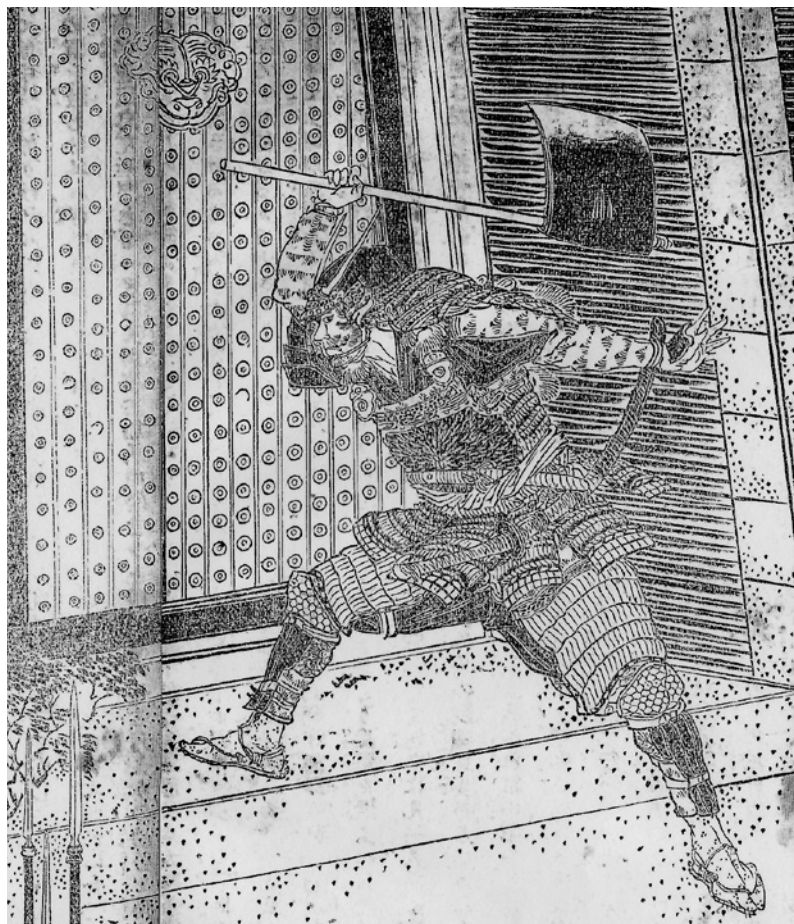
nagamaki as a ‘horses’ leg-breaker’ (quoted in Sasama 2004: 124), and it is likely that *nagamaki* are being described in the following account of Japanese weapons in action overseas. The operation was the capture from the Dutch of Fort Zeelandia on Taiwan in 1662 by the Chinese warlord Zheng Chenggong (1624–62), known in the West as Koxinga. In the operation Koxinga used a troop of so-called ‘Iron Men’, who are likely to have been Japanese mercenaries. As the Dutch commander recorded, ‘many wielded with both hands a formidable battle-sword fixed to a stick half the length of a man. Everyone was protected over the upper part of the body with a coat of iron scales, fitting below one another like the slates of a roof; the arms and legs being left bare. This afforded complete protection from rifle bullets’ (Campbell 1903: 420–21). After the battle the dismembered bodies of horses and men lay everywhere, a description of a tactic and its result that sounds like the use of *nagamaki*.



Axes, clubs and pulling devices as weapons and tools

The use on the battlefield of axes and the objects that look like war hammers is a problematic issue because of a dearth of references to them being used as anti-personnel weapons, so it is more likely that they were hand-held siege implements intended for destroying fortifications. Examples are shown clearly on the Twelve Animals' War Scroll, where two axes and one *tsurubashi* are thrust through samurai's belts instead of being used to attack an opponent. This suggests that the implements are being carried to attack their enemies' fortress, a scenario that is indeed mentioned in a later scene of the scroll. Unfortunately, there are no depictions of the items being used in that scene, so the Twelve Animals' War Scroll's evidence remains inconclusive.

In one of his books Sasama includes sketches of *ashigaru* using tools like these to remove field fortifications and also to demolish a building (Sasama 2000: 241 & 301). The implements include axes, *heitsui* (heavy wooden mallets), long saws and various polearms with sickle-shaped heads, so we must conclude that this is the primary purpose of such objects. In 1609 the gate of Nakijin *gusuku* (castle) on Okinawa was broken down by the mighty axe of the samurai Hikita Jūzaemon,



Axes appear on Japanese battlefields primarily as siege tools, as shown in this book illustration showing a samurai called Hikita Jūzaemon using his mighty axe to break down the gate of Nakijin *gusuku* (castle) on Okinawa during the invasion of the islands by the Shimazu family in 1609. Otherwise, they appear as improvised weapons during farmers' protest riots.

A unique account of single combat involving an *ōmasakari* appears in the *Taiheiki* account of the 1353 combat between Akamatsu Ujinori and Nagayama Tōtōmi-no-Kami. This *ema* (votive prayer board) hangs inside the shrine of the Akamatsu family in Hyōgo Prefecture, where Ujinori's triumph over the unusual weapon is commemorated with pride.



according to the *gunkimono* of the victorious invaders from the Shimazu family (Ogata 1898: 116–18).

There are, however, two clear references in *Taiheiki* to axes being taken into battle as weapons. The first occurs during the attack on the ‘mountain gate’ (i.e. Mount Hiei) where a warrior identified as the Hachishoji (i.e. lord of the eight shrines) of Kumano, who is described as almost 8 *shaku* (2.4m) tall, carries on his right shoulder an *ōmasakari* with a huge one-*shaku* (30.3cm) blade with a boar’s-eye pierced hole as decoration. He also holds an oak *bō*, 9 *shaku* (272.7cm) long, in his left hand (*Taiheiki* 17). The other passage in *Taiheiki* provides the sole account in the whole of Japanese history of a single combat between a horseman armed with a sword and one with an *ōmasakari*. It was a contest fought in 1353 between Akamatsu Ujinori (1330–86) and Nagayama Tōtōmi-no-Kami. Nagayama first waved his great axe with its 8 *sun* (24.2cm)-wide ‘teeth’ as a challenge. Ujinori witnessed the performance from a distance and responded in kind – first in words, then with force – as Nagayama came towards him, swinging his *ōmasakari* and causing great devastation:

Taking hold of the above mentioned axe, he brought it down with his hand and the impact split and broke helmet bowls in one go; so Ujinori held his sword level to keep him at a distance, keeping the shaft of the axe on his left side and tugging at it with one hand; the two horses were too close together for either to get in a stroke against the other, so they pulled against each other as Ujinori grabbed at the axe to seize it. Its ‘leech-wrapped’ shaft was of oak, but he cut it in half, although showing his usual skill Nagayama kept his arm in position with the direction of the axe interposed against Ujinori’s left side. Until then Nagayama had not expected to be defeated by Ujinori’s sword, but his strength had been broken by Ujinori and, overcome by this unexpected challenge, he soon fell from his horse. (*Taiheiki* 32)

Any of the tools noted above could of course be used *in extremis* as a weapon, and the numerous peasant uprisings in Japan during the



15th century no doubt saw a large number of agricultural tools such as sickles and axes being pressed into service. Sasama provides an illustration of how even the shaft of a battle standard could be used aggressively. Its iron ferrule had the convenient shape of a reversed crescent – ideal for locking on to a rung of a scaling ladder and using the flagstaff to push the ladder away from the wall (Sasama 2004: 179).

By contrast, the *kanasaibō* are unquestionably battlefield weapons. Unlike the need for a sword blade to be channelled into a narrow cutting area or for a *yari* to be thrust into a small gap, the top-heavy *kanasaibō* could deliver a massive blow against a generalized area that would at the very least stun the opponent. This lack of fine control over a *kanasaibō* that even the strongest samurai must have experienced surely accounts for the rarity of its use, however, and in reality the best target to go for would probably have been an opponent's legs. Along with his axe, the aforementioned Hachishoji of Kumano carried an eight-sided oak *kanasaibō* over 8 *shaku* (242.4cm) long. Elsewhere in *Taiheiki* we read of four warriors on the Akamatsu side, 'wearing on their heads helmets ornamented with dragon heads, bearing large swords over five *shaku* in length at their belts and *kanabō* thought to be over 8 *shaku* in length, with octagonal sides except for the lower two *shaku* where they were rounded for a hand grip'; one of their number, Tanaka Tōkurō Morikane, walked quietly forwards, 'swinging his *kanabō*' (*Taiheiki* 8).

As for *kumade*, the Twelve Animals' War Scroll shows two being carried into battle, and during the 11th century one samurai received a blow on the top of his helmet from a long-shafted *kumade*. The 'claws' dug in, but before his assailant was able to drag him off his horse the

This detail from the Kasuga Gongen Scroll shows the use of a *kumade* during a land battle. The assailant has caught hold of his opponent's helmet. Note that the shaft of the *kumade* has additional chains linking the striking head to the shaft.

A samurai identified as Kojima Kagekuni, on one of a print series of brave warriors from Kai Province, wields a long *kanasaibō* on foot. This was the only really practical way to deploy these heavy and unwieldy wood-and-iron clubs that could deliver a blow to wind or stun an opponent.



victim chopped through the shaft with his sword, and rode off with a new and unusual helmet crest (Sasama 2004: 125). Otherwise, *kumade* were mainly used as grappling irons in maritime battles, and this is probably the purpose of the one shown on the Mongol Invasion Scroll because the troops are marching on their way to take on the Mongol fleet. On the Scroll of the Miracles of Kasuga Gongen, however, an identical weapon appears in a land battle.

The *yari* in battle

Straight-bladed *yari* make a reappearance in samurai warfare from the 14th century onwards in a form similar to the ancient *boko*, but one of the earliest examples of fighting with *yari* claims that the weapon in question

was a unique battlefield modification. It had a very short blade and was called the *kikuchi-yari* from the name of the family who are said to have improvised it during the 14th century. In 1335 Kikuchi Takeshige (1307–38) had lost most of his bows and *naginata* and was on the verge of being defeated, so he cut from a nearby grove hundreds of pieces of bamboo of about 2.5m in length. His samurai affixed their *tantō* blades into the open ends of the bamboo shafts. ‘*Kikuchi sembon yari*’ (the thousand spears of the Kikuchi) became a popular local expression to indicate rising from defeat to overcome one’s enemies. In all probability the Kikuchi improvisation was nothing new, because a very similar weapon appears on the Kasuga Gongen Scroll held in the hands of a badly wounded warrior.

A written account confirming the use of long *yari* during the Ōnin War appears in *Ōnin ki* in the story of the death of Ichijō Masafusa (1443–69): ‘Any ignorant person should have recognized him as a nobleman, yet some warrior, without pausing for thought, assumed that Masafusa was an enemy and ran a long spear through his breast’ (Shimura 2017: 143). A very different incident involving the use of the *yari* is also recorded during the Ōnin War. Sumiya Magojirō, who had killed several enemy samurai, was impaled upon a long spear. Even though he was dead, the *yari* had passed right through his body and fixed him to the ground in an upright position with his eyes wide open. No one dared approach him (Varley 1967: 164).

The head of a short-bladed *yari*. There is a groove along the flat edge of the blade, which is of triangular cross-section. The tang is buried deeply within the spear shaft and protected by a metal collar. This example is similar to descriptions of the *monomi-no-yari* (scout’s spear).

Weapons of the late 14th century (overleaf)

This plate shows typical samurai weapons from about the time of the Ōei Rebellion of 1399, which was conducted by Ōuchi Yoshihiro against *shōgun* Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. This was an era before firearms were introduced, so the predominant missile weapon is the *yumi* (bow). For edged weapons there is a secondary use of *hoko* (straight spears); otherwise, the weapon of choice is the *naginata* (glaive). The inspiration for the plate’s design and contents is the fascinating *Jūnirui kassen emaki* (Twelve Animals’ War Scroll), to which several references are made in the text. The original version amusingly depicts the animals of the Chinese zodiac fighting a battle. In spite of its humorous and moral intent (the good animals win!), the scroll shows the protagonists in contemporary armour of about 1400 with a multitude of highly detailed samurai weapons and is one of the best sources for the time. Here the animals have become human.

On the extreme left of the illustration one samurai carries in his left hand an *ōdachi*, the extra-long sword also known as a *nodachi*. The man in front of him has a very different weapon: a *kanasaibō*, the very heavy wood-and-iron club that could deliver a stunning blow. Their comrade in the background holds a somewhat old-fashioned weapon: the *hoko* or straight spear that would soon develop into the *yari*. Their opponent, in the foreground, has a very familiar weapon in the form of a *naginata*, the glaive. To his rear is a samurai with the conventional and much-prized elite combination of bow and arrows, but he is operating on foot in *nobushi* (skirmisher) style. A fifth warrior sinks the ‘claws’ of his *kumade* (rake) into an opponent’s helmet. It would be wise to keep him at a distance, because he has a *masakari*, a huge war axe. He also has through his belt a *tsuruhashi*, a pickaxe-like tool that could be used as a war hammer.







The simplest of all shafted weapons was the improvised bamboo spear with a sharp cutting edge created simply by slicing through a section of bamboo. This print shows one such weapon in the hands of a farmer who is lying in wait for the samurai general Akechi Mitsuhide (1528–82), the usurper defeated at the battle of Yamazaki in 1582.



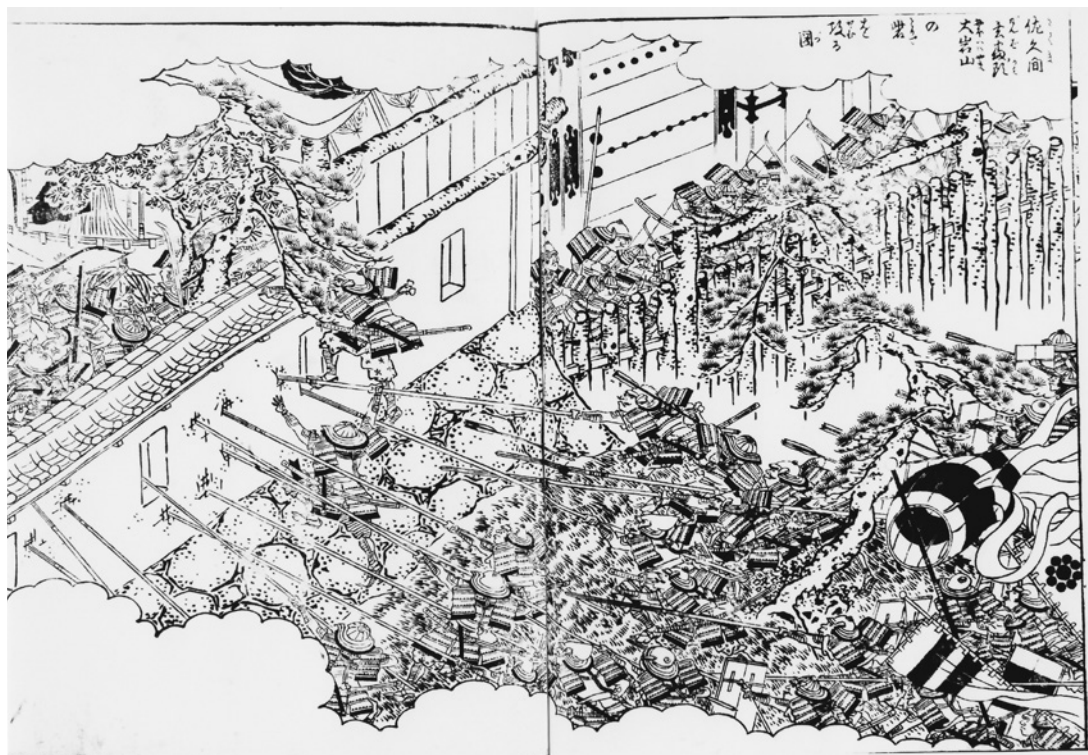
These incidents show the *yari* being used as an individual weapon by isolated samurai, but an important development occurred at about the same time that would be a harbinger of Japan's future infantry revolution. It involved the use of spears by groups of samurai standing shoulder to shoulder, so it was not quite the same as the weapon squads of the 1540s, but the important point to note is that the spearmen were operating as a coordinated group rather than merely as individuals.

The battle was the attack by the Eastern Army in 1467 in Kyoto against the positions of the Western Army at the Buddhist temple of Shōkokoji, or rather the remains of it, because much of the temple had been destroyed by fire. *Ōnin ki* repeatedly refers to the actions it

describes as taking place ‘on the site of the Shōkokuji’. The recent devastation had the effect of creating a large empty space right in the middle of Japan’s capital city, where mounted samurai could operate unhindered by streets and alleyways and sweep aside opponents on foot in the traditional manner. The plans of attack made by the Eastern Army, in command of which was Hatakeyama Masanaga (1442–93), were designed to counter that situation. Masanaga had trained his samurai to advance in dense formations of spearmen protected by heavy wooden shields. His opponents were surprised that Masanaga willingly took on units of mounted samurai who outnumbered him by three to one, but *Ōnin ki* has him boasting that his tactics would allow him to overcome ‘a million enemies’. The words *Ōnin ki* puts into his mouth are, ‘this time it is not just bows and arrows that will triumph’. The account of what the chronicle calls ‘the battle of the Lotus Pond’ continues as follows:

They lined up with their shields held out in front of them and plunged towards the tiger’s mouth that was the enemy. Then, putting to one side their two or three hundred shields, they went in with their spears ... Out of Rokkaku Takayori’s force 60 or 70 men who had advanced fell fighting all together, while their foot soldiers collapsed as if in an avalanche and fled back to the allied lines. Isshiki Yoshinao’s unit at the Mountain Gate came to relieve them and made ready to exchange blows, but the defeat of the Rokkaku forces by the spears had not been anticipated, so, thinking that the fleeing Rokkaku side were the enemy,

The dramatic use of a number of long-shafted *yari* is shown in this book illustration depicting the army of Sakuma Morimasa (1554–83) assaulting the fortress of Ōiwa prior to the battle of Shizugatake in 1583. The *yari* blades slam into the loose outer plaster surface of the walls as other samurai climb over the parapet.



they engaged them in battle instead. Ishikawa Sado-no-Kami of the Isshiki unit and Ishikawa Kurō were both killed. Tōjō took their heads and cutting a way ahead with his sword, cornered the enemy and drove them down into the Lotus Pond. More than 600 heads were taken from the Isshiki and Rokkaku forces combined. (Shimura 2017: 98–99)

The victory did not go unnoticed, but the innovative Masanaga would soon be forced to abandon his position at the temple of Shōkokuji when Hatakeyama Yoshinari (c.1437–91), a rival from his own clan, brought up spear squads of his own. The result was a stalemate, and both sides settled down in defended lines and loosed arrows at each other across a blackened no man's land with occasional raids being conducted. Nevertheless, the Hatakeyama had hinted at a future military revolution by their innovative use of *yari*, although their mode of employment distinguishes the spearmen clearly from *ashigaru* as they were currently understood, because the spearmen mobilized by Hatakeyama Masanaga were not a rabble recruited from peasants and criminals. The Hatakeyama samurai may not have possessed horses but they were clearly valued by their lord and must have been highly trained in order to take a stand against mounted men.

This distinction between the Hatakeyama spearmen and the *ashigaru* can be seen most clearly if we look at one of the best-recorded and earliest uses of the genuinely irregular *ashigaru*, which took place a year later in 1468. Some 300 of them were recruited for the Eastern Army by a man called Honekawa Dōken who led his *ashigaru* into a minor action known as the battle of Inariyama, the hill on which stands the famous Fushimi Inari Shrine. The *ashigaru* went into battle using spears and swords, but lacked the discipline and training of the Hatakeyama spear squads at Shōkokuji. They were crushed by their opponents, and Honekawa Dōken only escaped from the battlefield by disguising himself as a woman.

The contrast with the later spear squads could not have been greater, a consideration that is reflected on the *Shinnyodō emaki* (Scroll of the Shinnyodō Temple), in which *ashigaru* are shown destroying a building and using their straight spears not for fighting but for prising up floorboards in search of loot. Their other offensive weapons are swords, and the group resembles a pirate gang more than samurai. In another section of the same scroll the attendant to a mounted samurai dressed in simple armour and carrying a *naginata* is placed in the foreground to show the contrast between himself and an *ashigaru* to the rear who wears only a jacket and has a stolen plank of wood on his shoulder.

During the Sengoku Period the *yari* developed into a highly versatile weapon that was swung freely from the saddle by strong and well-practised samurai who controlled their horses using their legs, just as the mounted archers did. When attacking another mounted samurai the greatest level of *yari* control was achieved by having one's opponent on one's left side, which was also the preferred attack mode for a mounted

archer. Otherwise, the *yari* was held out to the side of the horse in the right hand and swung either in huge slashing strokes or with more delicacy and precision as a thrusting weapon. When attacking *ashigaru* or other samurai on foot a *yari* could be used like a European lance. *Yari* with side blades were more versatile because the projections acted as parrying hooks and could also be used for pulling a victim from his horse, an activity for which there are several references.

The 16th-century equivalent of the noble arrow duels of samurai legend was a single combat between champions using *yari*, although the presence of large armies that included organized weapon squads made such action virtually impossible in the heat of battle. It was, however, still practicable if performed before battle was joined, and could be a considerable morale-booster for the winning side. In *Wani Gundan* an encounter takes place between two mounted samurai just prior to the attack on Tanaka Castle in 1587:

Tōya indicated his acceptance of the challenge by grabbing hold of his cormorant-headed spear. When Gorōemon made as if to respond Tōya was encouraged. Neither was inferior to the other in his great strength as they came together at a gap in the single fence with shouts of ‘Eiya, Eiya!’ In the end their spear shafts bent and snapped in the middle, and both men ended up flat on the ground like two dogs separated after a fight. (Kumamoto 2000: 63)



Three *yari* blades of different sizes on display in Ōgaki Castle.

The chronicler notes that both sides waited patiently while this preliminary combat was taking place, but when battle was joined there was no time for politeness, either from organized weapon squads or from individual warriors. For example, in 1596 the Mogami met the Onodera samurai in battle at Oshimabara, where a general's head was taken and a certain Takada Ubasuke pierced the body of a *hatamoto* of the Mogami over the top of his armour (Akita Historical Association 1981: 91).

Finally, one unusual deployment of a *yari* was to convert it into a makeshift ladder, as demonstrated by Saeki Koretsune in 1554: ‘Before attacking, he carefully examined the structure of the castle from a distance, paying close attention to which wall of Takasaki Castle was best for climbing. There was a particular corner of the wall that he thought would be good. He therefore tied rope round his spear shaft in four or five locations and placed his feet there’ (Yuasa 1912: 12).

Combinations of edged weapon use in battle

Of course, any particular samurai weapon could be pitted against any other, and the majority of accounts in *gunkimono* describe a mixture of edged weapons being used in close combat, in which the *tantō* (dagger) would be the weapon of last resort before a samurai was left with only his bare hands. When Honda Yasushige (1554–1611) fought at the battle of Nagakute in 1584 a *katana* was his weapon of choice until the peg holding the blade inside the handle snapped. Hand-to-hand grappling (presumably using a *wakizashi* or a *tantō*) then began and Yasushige was wounded in seven places (Suzuki 2000b: 129–30).

For earlier examples of the use of edged weapons we have two from *Heike Monogatari*, the first of which recounts the single combat between Etchū Zenji Moritoshi and Inomata Noritsuna at the battle of Ichinotani in 1184. Noritsuna jumped on his opponent, grabbed his *tantō* and, pulling up the skirts of his armour, stabbed him so deeply that its handle and his fist went in too; then he cut off his head (Sadler 1921: 151–52). The second account is of the killing of Taira Tadanori (1144–84) at the same battle. Clutching Okabe Tadazumi he pulled him off his horse, giving two stabs with his *tantō* while he was still in the saddle and another as he fell. The first two blows were stopped by Tadazumi's armour while the third cut his face. As Tadanori jumped down to take his opponent's head Tadazumi's page, who had been riding behind him, dismounted and cut off Tadanori's arm just above his elbow (Sadler 1921: 154).

As for multiple use of larger weapons, the *gunkimono* called *Akamatsu Monogatari* contains a very good example of a bow and then an *ōdachi* being used against a *naginata* in the year 1441 (Yashiro 1994: 175–77). The story is about the assassination of the *shōgun* by the Akamatsu and the horrible act of retribution that was brought to bear upon them because of their treachery. A dramatic single combat was fought between Akana Yukihide, the senior retainer of the Akamatsu who had delivered the actual sword thrust that had killed the *shōgun*, and a samurai called Murano Kageyasu who fought Yukihide when the Akamatsu were finally cornered in their castle.

The account begins by noting that Yukihide's master Akamatsu Mitsusuke has already committed suicide, so his follower has nothing to live for except to seek death honourably and take as many rivals with him as he can. In preparation for his heroic death, Yukihide dresses calmly in a fine suit of armour patterned with tiny cherry blossoms and takes into his hands what is described as a 'long sword', which must be a *naginata* rather than an *ōdachi* because it is described as having a shaft of over 8 *shaku* (2.4m) in length. He chooses a position in the castle's south tower and shouts down a challenge to which Kageyasu responds. The latter is described as using a bow that needs five men to string it, and he looses from it an arrow of 13 spans and 3 fingers in length. The arrow buries itself deep into the shaft of Yukihide's *naginata* three *sun* (9.1cm) above its butt end. More arrows follow and sink firmly into the tower's superstructure, so Yukihide makes a rapid descent to take on Kageyasu in single combat.



Other enemy horsemen meet Yukihide as he arrives, but he is a ‘matchless warrior’ and takes on his adversaries in the ‘four-corners, eight sides’ style of fighting, furiously felling no fewer than 13 men with his *naginata*. Kageyasu apprises the situation and regrets that he cannot settle the matter by putting an arrow into the ‘demon’, so he leaps from his horse with a challenge to Yukihide. Kageyasu is armed with an *ōdachi* that is over 6 *shaku* (181.8cm) long. He raises it in front of him and advances in Yukihide’s direction. Yukihide hears the challenge and replies to it with a smile while taking hold of his own weapon with great skill, and attacks his opponent ‘with a dancing step’. Kageyasu responds in kind and they fight each other, but because both are very strong warriors they struggle for a whole hour with no sign of a decision going one way or the other. Yukihide then uses the butt of his *naginata* to strike Kageyasu on the front of his helmet. The blow must have stunned Kageyasu because it settles his fate, and the point of Yukihide’s weapon then pierces his neck to kill him.

The shorter of the two weapons carried at a samurai’s belt would come into its own when grappling began. Here a samurai holds another down and prepares to stab him with what appears to be a long version of a *tantō*. The blade is destined for the victim’s neck.

The blade of a short-bladed version of a *naginata*. It is of high-quality forging and was probably made early in the Edo Period. There is a slight chip to the cutting edge.





In this illustration from *Taiheiki Yuei* (an illustrated version of *Taiheiki*) a samurai rams the iron butt of his *naginata* into the face of his opponent. This was the tactic used by Akana Yukihide, a senior retainer of the Akamatsu, against a samurai called Murano Kageyasu who fought Yukihide when the Akamatsu were cornered in their castle.

MISSILE WEAPONS ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The use of the *yumi*

Heroic instances of mounted archery by skilled individuals are to be found throughout the early *gunkimono*, although to loose an arrow from a galloping horse with any degree of accuracy while wearing the heavy *ōyoroï* type of armour must have been much more difficult than is suggested by its modern equivalent: the martial art of *yabusame* (horse archery). In war the target was not only moving but was also trying to kill you at the same time. The mounted archer was also constrained because he could only shoot well to his left side along an arc of about 45 degrees from about the nine o'clock to eleven o'clock positions relative to the direction of movement, because the horse's neck prevented the firing angle from being any wider. The overall drawing technique was, however, the same as it is today. The mounted archer holds his bow high above his horse's head and then brings it down, moving his hands apart in the draw as he does so. When his left arm is straight and his right hand is near the right ear the bowstring is released. The bow will then rotate in his left hand as it delivers the arrow.

Contrary to the popular image of battles beginning with single combat by mounted archers like these following noble challenges, many conflicts of the early period started with surprise attacks or night raids to catch the enemy off guard, so that the deadly arrows seemingly came from nowhere. A notable example is the behaviour of the famous mounted archer Minamoto Tametomo (1139–70) during the Hōgen Incident in 1156.

Tametomo launched a raid using a surprise archery assault, loosing many arrows clean through saddles, horses and opponents. *Hōgen Monogatari* describes one such encounter using a *kabura ya* fitted with a forked head. The arrow whistled as it flew through the palace and hit Ōba Heita's left knee at a range of 60–70yd. It then cut through his stirrup and then clean through his horse's belly, at which point it shattered. The horse fell like a folding scene, depositing its rider on the ground (Wilson 1971: 43).

Another classic instance of the use of a bow from horseback against another mounted samurai appears in the *Heike Monogatari* account of the battle of Shinohara in 1183. A warrior named Arikuni had penetrated very deeply into the enemy ranks and had his horse killed from under him; he then fought on with his hair streaming in all directions. His arrows were soon exhausted so he drew his sword and fought fiercely until he was hit by seven or eight arrows and died while still standing upright, glaring at his enemies (Sadler 1921: 35).

On rare occasions we read of arrows being thrown at an enemy rather than loosed from a bow. These would be the heavier versions and were used like darts or light javelins, although specialized throwing arrows – such as the heavy feathered darts called *uchine* – did exist. Fire arrows (*hiya*) had an enlarged head like a *kabura* that could be filled with combustible oil. Otherwise, oiled cloth was wrapped around the arrow just behind the head and ignited. It was recommended that fire arrows should be loosed in volleys to prevent the enemy from extinguishing the flames before the individual arrows burned out. In situations of single combat, pictorial evidence shows that when a mounted archer was finished with his bow it would be slung round his shoulders or hung from the scabbard reel before edged weapons were used. Alternatively, the bow could be handed to an attendant.

Arrow exchanges still dominated the narrative during the Nambokuchō Wars and arrow wounds still accounted for most of the casualties, but it is about this time that we begin to see references to a different way of using the bow. It went under the general name of *nobushi*, a word that does not indicate a particular group or class of warrior but a technique. The literal meaning of *nobushi* is 'those who hide in fields' because it was the tactic of archery skirmishing. It was probably carried out during the Gempei War but *gunkimono* of the time are so dominated by heroic accounts of mounted archery that *nobushi* warfare is almost totally ignored. Sasama, however, quotes an unusual reference from *Gempei Seisui ki* to a group of archers in a tower being 'men not wearing helmets who are skilled at loosing bows', i.e. lightly armoured archers, not elite samurai who have temporarily abandoned their horses (Sasama 1997: 18). An interesting observation about archery conducted from a similar defended position also appears in *Taiheiki*, where, 'waiting at the tops of the towers or hidden behind loopholes, warriors who appeared to be archers drew their bowstrings to the full, spread out bundles of arrows, and smeared nasal mucus on to the arrows that would be used in the battle' (*Taiheiki* 8).

Almost invariably operating on foot, the *nobushi* archers of the 14th century would pick off individual warriors, and *nobushi* is the tactic

being described in the following passage from *Taiheiki*. The skilled archer Sayo Saemon Noriie was a close kinsman of the Akamatsu family, but in spite of his status he was well-versed in the *nobushi* tactics of his opponents. Stripping off his armour, he headed for a thicket as if he too were a simple archer who operated solely on foot:

He concealed himself within the bushes on the ridge, and while hidden in the shadows he took aim at General Nagoe Owari-no-Kami and waited to loose his arrow. Owari-no-Kami disposed of three enemies and, having wiped away their blood using his helmet flag, sheathed his sword. He opened his fan and sat motionless as Noriie drew ever closer with his bow aimed, and at last he pulled back the string to release the whistling arrow. The arrow did not stray from its target, but hit Owari-no-Kami right in the middle of his forehead a little below the helmet. It smashed his brains and shattered his skull, and the arrowhead emerged as a white thing from his neck bone. The mighty general's body could not withstand such an arrow wound, and he fell down from his horse. (*Taiheiki* 9)

Nobushi was therefore a tactic in which high-ranking samurai would happily participate alongside the low-ranking samurai who were forced to fight on foot because of their status, as is further indicated by an interesting incident when *nobushi* archers were lured into open fields and killed. The assailants discovered that of their 14 victims five were of samurai rank (Conlan 2003: 70). The episode also confirms the fact that groups of horsemen could overcome scattered sharpshooters unless their mobility was restricted by the terrain, hence the emphasis in the meaning of the word '*nobushi*' on 'hiding', for which alleyways in towns and restricted narrow mountain paths were the ideal killing grounds. On another occasion some samurai horsemen of the Hosokawa were trapped on the edge of Lake Biwa and came under attack from *nobushi* archers in boats (Conlan 2003: 72).

Protection could be provided for *nobushi* skirmishers by the use of shields, although Japanese shields were not hand-held devices (except for a few obscure specimens) but instead heavy wooden boards mounted via a supportive hinge to a stout support. Some were known to have been made from looted temple doors. They could stop arrows but were not easily portable, so they tended to be used for warfare from defensive positions rather than in a roaming sniper role. The Kasuga Gongen Scroll shows small groups of mutually supportive mounted and foot samurai using shields. The Twelve Animals' War Scroll shows a samurai running along with the strut of a shield under his arm and the shield held in front of him, while another carries the shield on his back. Elsewhere a shield is used as a makeshift ladder for scaling a castle's walls.

Opportunistic arrow warfare, either by skilled mounted archers or the increased use of skirmishing techniques like these, continued into the 15th century, hence a passage in the *Akamatsu Monogatari* in which a samurai is 'shot through the breast' by an arrow in 1441 (Yashiro 1994: 180). *Ya awase* (archery exchanges) also dominated the battlefield in the



unique setting of the burned-out lots in Kyoto that characterized the Ōnin War. During one of the early battles in 1467 a young warrior aged 13 or 14 was ‘pierced in the breast by an arrow’ and killed instantly (Shimura 2017: 48).

In several entries in the diary of an eyewitness called Konoe Masaie, the author laments that in the first year of the Ōnin War, ‘all day [we face] *ya ikusa* [arrow warfare] ... Today practically above everything else, it is *ya ikusa* ... In Kyoto every day there is *ya ikusa* in several places ... Ōuchi Masahiro carried out arrow exchanges in various locations’ (Suzuki 2001: 109). These comments are supported by Suzuki’s analysis of the *gunchūjō*, the petitions for reward that included lists of wounds, which he has studied for the first two years of the Ōnin War. His sample reveals that of the 52 named wounded, 11 had spear wounds and five wounds from other cutting weapons, while three suffered stone wounds and no fewer than 30 had arrow wounds (Suzuki 2001: 110).

The fatal arrow that killed the young warrior in Kyoto could have been delivered by an elite mounted archer rather than a skirmisher, but a likely instance of a *nobushi* ambush as late as 1587 is recorded in *Wani Gundan* for the final hours of the siege of Tanaka Castle. A mounted samurai of the Tachibana called Yufu Ōinosuke rode forward to challenge one of the castle’s commanders, but a defending archer was acting as a sharpshooter and was concealed from view, probably inside the upper

ABOVE LEFT

The fine details of a bow and an *ebira*-type quiver full of arrows are shown in this hanging scroll in the Kanshinji depicting Kusunoki Masashige (1294–1336), the great hero of the Nambokuchō Wars.

ABOVE RIGHT

Serious arrow injuries could lead to samurai dying lingering deaths or suffering the agony of having a barbed arrowhead withdrawn during field surgery, but minor flesh wounds caused little concern, hence the well-known theme in Japanese prints showing wounded samurai pierced by numerous arrows, as in this example in which a wounded warrior crawls towards a Jizō statue, believed by Buddhists to bestow protection and longevity.

storey of an enclosed gatehouse. Ōinosuke's followers shouted at him to withdraw but their master was deaf and could not hear them. He advanced to the gateway, at which point the 'sniper' loosed an arrow towards him. The arrow pierced Ōinosuke's breastplate and went through as far as the middle of his back so that he fell dead from his horse (Kumamoto 2000: 65).

Sometimes, of course, arrows could be almost totally ineffective against their intended victims, as shown by an incident from 1563 when a single combat that could easily have been decided by one arrow became a sword fight. Tokugawa Ieyasu's retainer Mizuno Sakon was challenged by Ōmi Fujiroku, a leader in the Ikkō-ikki Buddhist sectarian army. Sakon was armed with a spear but Fujiroku had a bow and loosed a succession of arrows against his opponent. None was effective in stopping Sakon's advance, however, so when his arrows ran out Fujiroku discarded his bow and was about to draw his sword when Sakon thrust at him with his spear. Fujiroku's armour was good and deflected the spear blade, and the pair came nose to nose. Fujiroku finally managed to draw his sword, at which point Sakon discarded his spear, drew his own sword and killed Fujiroku with one mighty single stroke (Suzuki 2000b: 126–27).

Bows were still to be found in active use on the battlefields of Japan as late as 1615 at the battle of Yao, one of the preliminary engagements before the last battle at Osaka Castle and a time when conventional wisdom has it that firearms now predominated on the battlefield. A skilled archer called Katō Gonzaemon who fought for the Tōdō was faced by three opponents. He put an arrow into one man's left breast, but then his bowstring was cut through, probably by an opponent's sword blade. The two other opponents advanced with drawn swords and wounded Gonzaemon in six places. Precise details are given that the neck guard of his helmet was cut off and he was wounded on the forehead, left arm, top of his right shoulder and the fingers of both hands. When his sword was knocked out of his hands he drew his *wakizashi* and cut down one man. Seeing this, his remaining opponent fled (Suzuki 2000b: 132).

Stone throwing

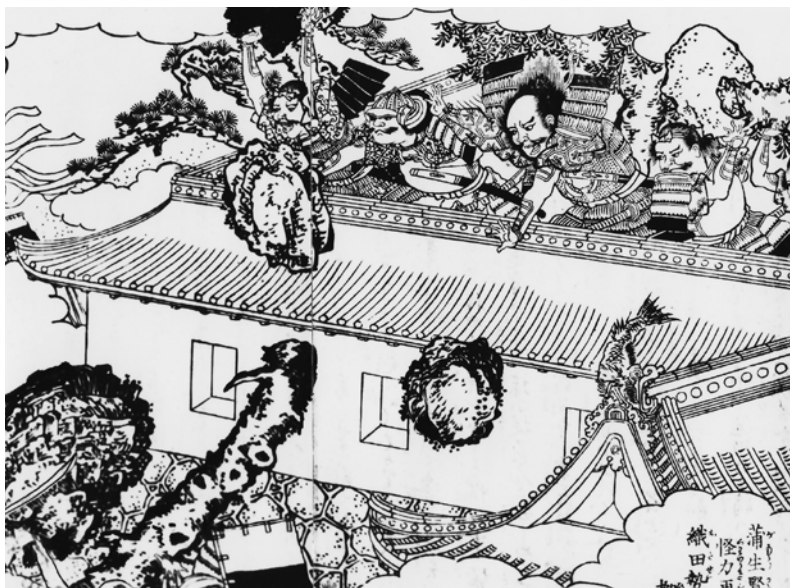
The use of stone throwing in Japanese history overwhelmingly occurred when a fortress was being defended, and the act of stones being thrown down by hand continued to play an important role in castle defence until late into the Sengoku Period. In *Taiheiki* we read of the immensely strong monk called Honshōbō, who 'tied back the sleeves of his robe and easily picked up huge boulders that even a hundred men could not lift, but he threw down twenty or thirty of them in succession' (*Taiheiki* 3). A named example of a death as a result of being hit by a stone occurred a century later during an attack on a fortified position in Kyoto, and is vividly described in *Ōnin ki*: 'The famous shugodai of Kaga, Majima Kawachino-Kami had just fought his way as far as the foot of the tower, when the enemy dropped a large stone that smashed his helmet and resulted in killing him' (Shimura 2017: 74). Shortly afterwards in the same chronicle, during Takeda Mototsuna's defence of the fortified temple of Sambō-In:

A huge rock smashed into his three-plate iron helmet, and the impact snapped his 7 *shaku* 3 *sun*-long *ōdachi* ... at its *habaki* [sleeve]. Even though Mototsuna had lost his sword he made good his escape, uttering a noise like a bellowing ox, and none dared pursue him. Tokoro Gensan was also killed, his eyes and mouth covered in blood. (Shimura 2017: 74)

On very rare occasions stones could be thrown during a field battle. The first ‘shots’ of the battle of Mikata ga Hara in 1573 were actually stones flung into the darkening gloom by press-ganged local farmers who had been sent ahead of Takeda Shingen’s front line to provoke the Tokugawa into firing back at them and thus disclosing the location of their positions. Some of the stones fell with sufficient force to require the samurai to lean forward so that the neck guards of their helmets protected their heads and faces (Owada 1989: 181–82).

One way in which stones were delivered from the stockades during the Gosannen War (1083–89) was by using an *ishiyumi*, a puzzling term that literally translates as ‘stone bow’, but in fact indicates a simple contrivance whereby large rocks that were too heavy to be lifted and thrown by hand were hung by ropes from a stockade’s walls. *Ishiyumi* would have been placed in position prior to an attack being launched and were secured through a loophole to a stout foundation of some sort. The rope would be cut by a well-timed sword stroke so that the heavy rock was released and fell on to the attackers. There is a very good illustration of one on the Gosannen War Scroll (Sasama 2004: 38–39).

The word ‘*ishiyumi*’ crops up from time to time until well into the 15th century. In 1438 the *shōgun*’s army advancing on rebel-held Kamakura was ambushed from makeshift field defences featuring *ishiyumi* on the cliffs overlooking the Pass of Hakone. A shield wall had stopped



Stones thrown or dropped by hand were a persistent feature of Japanese sieges throughout samurai history, and castles built as late as the early 17th century would have stone-dropping holes incorporated in their defences. Here, large boulders and a tree trunk are thrown down by the defenders of a castle.



The Gosannen War Scroll shows the use of an *ishiyumi*, a simple contrivance whereby large rocks that were too heavy to be lifted and thrown by hand were hung by ropes from a stockade's walls. The rope would be cut by a well-timed sword stroke so that the heavy rock fell down on to the attackers. This dropped rock has removed a samurai's helmet. Elsewhere in the picture a hero receives an arrow in his eye socket.

the army in its tracks so the horsemen dismounted, and using their shoulder plates as a defence against incoming arrows they charged up the slopes:

At this Ōmori's soldiers and the local Hakone unit released their *ishiyumi* all in one go. Many tens of thousands of troops were sent flying by this and a tide of humanity fell down one on top of the other into the deep valley bottom. Few of them may actually have been killed by the enemy, but the number killed by being pierced through by their own swords or *naginata* is impossible to gauge. (*Eikyō ki* 5)

The use of Chinese-style firearms

Often dismissed as ineffective and useful only for signalling or scaring enemy horses, Chinese-style *hiya* could in fact pack quite a punch even if they lacked accuracy, and there is some remarkable evidence for their firepower because one surviving specimen kept in private hands until the 20th century was test-fired by its owner. It had three barrels held in place by a single iron hoop and welded together into an end spike that would have been set into a wooden stock. Only one chamber of the *hiya* was fired during the test, and instead of using a bullet the projectile was a small wooden plug hammered tightly into the gun's mouth:

After this the fuse, which had been inserted into the touch hole, was ignited using live coals. Accordingly the man who had been holding the gun and the man with the fuse both walked away. At the moment of ignition there was a discharge from the gunpowder and the wooden plug was fired out with a huge 'Bang'. The noise was so great it could have shattered eardrums and was as loud as any modern firearm. Furthermore, the wooden plug that had been driven into the muzzle

vanished in the blink of an eye. It probably flew for about 200 metres, demonstrating an amazing power that would certainly suffice to cause casualties. The children were frightened and would not come near. (Tōma 1994: 127–28)

The best evidence for the deployment of firearms in Japan is suggested by references in the literature to the bullets fired from them and the wounds they caused, because one of the characteristics of the Ryūkyūan *hiya* was the use of different types of materials for their projectiles. As well as metal bullets made from iron or copper there have been numerous finds of bullets made from fired clay and others created from pebbles, either ones that by nature were almost spherical or ones that had been artificially rounded. Firearms firing stone bullets may therefore explain some of the references to warriors suffering ‘stone wounds’. For example, when Ōno Castle in Aki Province was attacked in 1524, 15 men suffered *ishikizu*, so this reference may provide the earliest written record in Japanese history of a samurai being wounded by any sort of firearm (Suzuki 2000a: 28). A stone thrown down on to an attacker’s head is of course an alternative explanation, and Conlan believes that the most likely candidate for the honour of being the first named samurai to be shot by a firearm was instead a warrior called Kobatake Sukezaemonnojō, who was wounded in 1527. Rather than being recorded as receiving an *ishikizu*, Sukezaemonnojō suffered an *ikizu* (literally ‘shot wound’) to his left leg. Two other warriors identified in the same report received spear wounds to the left foot and to the side respectively, but no arrow wounds are mentioned. It therefore seems likely that Sukezaemonnojō was wounded by a bullet from a firearm rather than being struck by a thrown stone (Conlan 2010: 132).

Further evidence for the use of firearms in battle appears in 1542 – the year before the Portuguese arrived with their arquebuses – when the Ōuchi attacked the Amako’s Akana Castle. The defenders were pioneers in firearms use, and the *Unyō gunjikki*, the *gunkimono* of the Amako family, says that the castle’s defenders included ‘200 *ashigaru* with twenty *teppō* mixed in with the bows’ (Suzuki 2000: 34). Elsewhere in the same work the author adds, ‘these things called *teppō* were known in China from antiquity’, a phrase that, taken together with the date, would appear to rule out arquebuses as the only meaning for *teppō* (Suzuki 2000a: 34).

A passage in *Kōyō Gunkan*, the epic history of the military actions of the Takeda family, includes what is probably the best description of Chinese-style firearms in battle. The conflict was the battle of Uedahara in 1548 and the weapons were the three-barrelled *hiya* that was popular on Okinawa. The evidence for this lies in the *Kōyō Gunkan* description of how they were to be used, because each gunner was given three bullets. They were ordered to fire and then not to reload but to discard the weapons for hand-to-hand fighting (Nakamura et al. 1965: 221–22). This can only make sense if the weapons are three-barrelled, so the *Kōyō Gunkan* story – related in detail in my book *Samurai vs Ashigaru* – is probably the best-recorded use of Chinese-style firearms in Japanese history.

The early deployment of the *teppō*

Whatever other transmission routes may have existed, the first mention of *teppō* being used in battle in Japan occurs during the conflicts between the Shimazu of Satsuma Province and local *kokujin* (small landowners) not far from Tanegashima. In 1549 Shimazu Takahisa (1514–71) sent his general Ijūin Tadaaki (1520–61) against the fortress of Kajiki. The account of the operation in the *Takahisa-Kō Gofu* reads as follows:

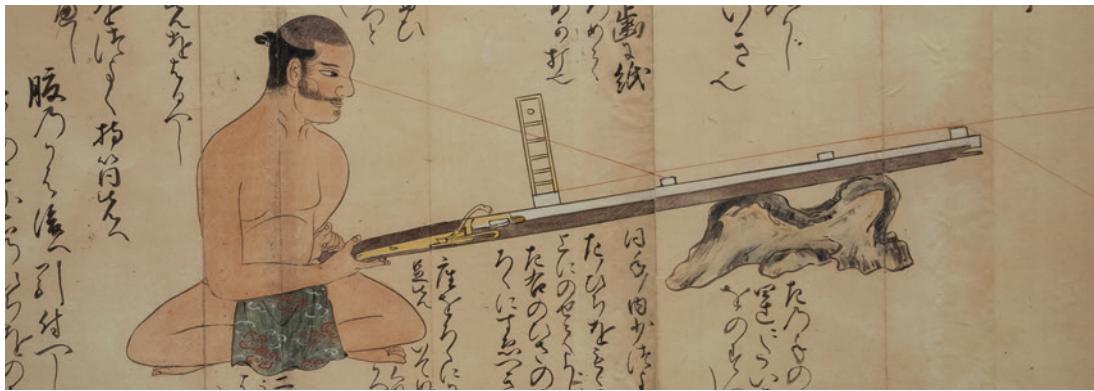
On the first day of that same sixth month we set up lines against Echizen-no-Kami, and the distance between the two sides did not exceed one *chō* [109m]. Their fighting strength increased when the Shibuya and also the Gamō families came along, whereupon day after day winged arrows flew and *teppō* were fired, thus months passed to the amazement of ear and eye. (Kirino 2001: 58)

This engagement, known as the battle of Kurokawasaki from the place adjacent to Kajiki Castle where it occurred, is tantalizingly ambiguous about which side was actually using *teppō*. Was it the humble confederacy of *kokujin* (which is implied both by the conjunction ‘whereupon’ and the chronicler’s resultant amazement), the lordly Shimazu, or both? If the mighty Shimazu were using *teppō* one might have expected to find more references to their deployment as the operations against the *kokujin* continued, yet five more years pass before we encounter the first unambiguous account of arquebuses being used by the Shimazu themselves. In fact in 1551, when the Shimazu’s outpost of Mei Castle came under attack, arquebuses were used in the assault and contributed to 130 casualties among the defenders (Wada 2001: 196).

The first confirmed use of the new weapons by the Shimazu family did not happen until 1554 when they launched an attack against the Iwatsurugi Castle. Shimazu Tadamasa (1520–61) brought up five ships and fired *teppō* into the castle, killing 13 men (Kirino 2001: 59). This bold move did not herald a local military revolution, however, because in 1556 Shimazu Yoshihiro (1535–1619) attacked a castle in Ōsumi and is recorded as having received arrow wounds in four or five places. There is

The fine detail of the hand-grip end of a *teppō*. To protect the user from premature explosions the priming pan into which the priming powder was carefully introduced was closed by a brass sliding cover that was swung back at the last moment. The explosion in the priming pan set off the charge in the barrel with quite a considerable degree of recoil and a lot of smoke.





no mention of *teppō* being used by friend or foe; instead there were only arrows and stones. Two years later, Yoshihiro was again hit by an arrow against his armour during hand-to-hand fighting, still with no mention of firearms being used (Suzuki 2000a: 55).

This illustration shows how an elevated sight could be used for taking aim with a *teppō* that was too heavy to be held in the hands.

While the Shimazu were slow to take advantage of the new weapons, others distant from Tanegashima had been far from idle. The first unambiguous reference to anyone being shot dead by a *teppō* concerns a battle in Kyoto in 1550, when the fatal shot was fired by a follower of the influential Hosokawa Harumoto (1514–63), who had used his position to oust the current *shōgun*. Harumoto deployed *nobushi* armed with *teppō* in the defence of Nakao Castle, which was built among the hills of Higashiyama above Kyoto's famous Ginkakuji (Silver Pavilion). His opponents were an army sent by Miyoshi Chōkei (1522–64), a rival contender for the position of 'Shogun-maker'. When the Miyoshi attacked Nakao Castle an anonymous Miyoshi samurai was killed by a bullet fired from the Hosokawa side (Suzuki 2000a: 42–43).

The greatest innovators in the use of firearms were not *daimyō* but the warrior monks of Negoroji in Kii Province, proud and independent warriors who flourished outside the clutches of any secular leader. Their adoption of *teppō* is supposed to date back to 1544, when one of the original Portuguese arquebuses was given to a monk from Negoroji. Whatever their weapons' origins, within a few years the monks were hiring out arquebusiers as mercenaries but, as is described below, they ultimately failed to protect their own interests in spite of their grasp of the new technology.

The *teppō* as an individual weapon

The deployment of *teppō* on a large scale by squads of *ashigaru* would be the ultimate result of the introduction of Portuguese arquebuses to Japan. Here I shall concentrate on the *teppō* as a firearm for individual sharpshooting by samurai. Accounts of this are limited, probably because it was eventually realized that the most effective use of *teppō* was to fire organized volleys, but enough references exist to confirm that the *teppō* was genuinely regarded as a personal weapon for samurai and that

proficiency in its use could be highly valued. There are in fact several references to *teppō* being given as gifts to curry favour with prestigious individuals. Those weapons were not kept for show but were used for hunting, for which accuracy in sharpshooting was required (Udagawa 2013: 5). The most prestigious individual in this regard was the *shōgun* Tokugawa Ieyasu, who is credited with using some form of heavy *teppō* – the type normally fired with the aid of some sort of rest – to bring down a crane that had settled on the roof of Hamamatsu Castle. Onlookers expressed surprise that he could lift and hold steady such a heavy weapon (Sadler 1937: 348).

According to his admiring biographer, Oda Nobunaga was another good shot with a *teppō*, as he demonstrated when he put just such a weapon into action for the first time during the siege of Muraki Castle in 1554. His samurai were suffering casualties from shots fired by *teppō* in the castle's loopholes. Three apertures in particular were providing the fiercest fire, so Nobunaga resolved to silence them personally. Stationing himself on the edge of the moat he kept up a constant fire against the loopholes simply by exchanging one pre-loaded *teppō* for another (Kuwata 1965: 38–39).

In his later years Nobunaga would survive two attempts on his life by assailants sharpshooting with *teppō*. A monk called Sugitani Zenjūbō, who was obviously a crack shot, lay in wait for Nobunaga and fired two bullets at him (presumably by having two separate *teppō* ready primed and loaded) but both bullets merely grazed their intended victim (Kuwata 1965: 104). During Nobunaga's savage invasion of Iga Province in 1581, three samurai lay in wait for the man who had brought them so much misery, and as Nobunaga sat surrounded by his followers they fired their *teppō* at him from three different directions. Although the shots missed Nobunaga they succeeded in killing seven or eight of his retainers. The chronicler, who hailed from Iga, concludes this account with a reference to his home province's great tradition of *ninjutsu*: 'The one among them called Otowa no Kido (Kido of Otowa) had acquired the mysteries of *bōjutsu hijutsu* [techniques of deception and fire]' (Momochi 1897: 4 & 5). My understanding of this expression is simply that Kido was an excellent sniper.

Finally, *Shincho-Kō ki* contains a unique description of a challenge to single combat involving a *teppō*. The setting was the battle of Ukino in 1559, the victory that led to the fall of Oda Nobunaga's cousin's Iwakura Castle. Nobunaga was busy shooting fire arrows and *teppō* into the fortress, when:

A man called Hayashi Yasuchirō was running away from the battlefield holding his bow. He hailed from the village of Asano and was a famous archer. Hashimoto Ippa, who was celebrated for his use of the arquebus, gave pursuit. They had been long time friends, but Yasuchirō shouted to Ippa, 'I am not going to spare your life.' 'I understand you,' said Ippa. Yasuchirō put an arrow to his bow; it had an arrowhead about four *sun* long. He turned round and sent the arrow deep into



Ippa's armpit. But Ippa had loaded his arquebus with two bullets, so he aimed and fired. Yasuchirō fell to the ground. One of Nobunaga's pages called Sawaki Tōhachi ran up with the intention of taking Yasuchirō's head. The latter was lying prostrate, but somehow managed to draw his sword and strike Tōhachi on his left elbow, chopping his forearm off along with its gloved hand. Tōhachi did not succumb, but kept fighting and finally took Yasuchirō's head. Hayashi Yasuchirō was a great swordsman as well as an accomplished archer. (Kuwata 1965: 72)

ABOVE LEFT

In a classic illustration of the *teppō* being used as a deadly weapon by a skilled sniper, a monk called Sugitani Zenjūbō lies in wait for Oda Nobunaga. Zenjūbō fired two bullets at Nobunaga (presumably by having two separate *teppō* ready primed and loaded) but both bullets merely grazed their target.

ABOVE RIGHT

In this heroic print Toyotomi Hidetsugu (1568–95) is shown ramming ammunition into the barrel of a *teppō*. He is dressed in elaborate civilian clothes, so the illustration is probably intended to show him using the weapon for hunting, for which the *teppō* was highly valued as a suitable gift among noble samurai.

Weapons of the late 16th century (overleaf)

The scene is the fall of Tottori Castle in 1581 after a 200-day siege, as Hideyoshi's army break their way into the castle keep. The samurai's armour is much more substantial than the armour depicted in the previous plate, and the samurai are accompanied by *ashigaru* in their characteristic *jingasa* ('war hats'). The attack is led by a samurai armed with a *nagamaki*, the variation on a *nodachi* that had a handle as long as its blade. He is supported by *ashigaru* armed with long spears and bows, but the most work is being done by the pair who wield an axe and a mallet respectively.

The toll the siege has taken on the defenders can be seen from their emaciated state. They try to hold the attackers back by firing a *teppō* and using their *yari*, but in their reduced state they will probably soon be overcome. Their leader has defiantly drawn his enormous *ōdachi*. It would certainly not be the weapon of choice for fighting in a confined space, but now that the wall has gone he has little to lose.







IMPACT

Evolution and influence

Bullets fired against armour plates might not be instantly fatal unless the bullet was from one of the large-calibre *ōzutsu*. One of those heavy shots is probably the explanation for this massive hole in an *ashigaru*'s breastplate on show in the museum at Sekigahara.

WEAPONS AND THE INDIVIDUAL SAMURAI

The introduction and development of new samurai weapons and their continued use alongside the old ones had an impact both on the individual samurai, samurai culture and on the nature of Japanese warfare. Beginning with the impact on the person, several *gunkimono* suggest how an individual samurai might react to the sights and noises of battle emanating from the clash of their weapons. *Heike Monogatari* provides an early example in its vivid description of sparks flying from weapons during a single combat outside the fortress of Ichinotani in 1184 (Sadler 1921: 143).

By the time of the Sengoku Period hand-to-hand fighting had become more intense, and Suzuki quotes several examples. At the battle of Sakamoto in 1565 an eyewitness writes of 'hearing the great force' of the army as well as seeing them, while at the battle of Azukizaka in 1542 the rival samurai 'shouted as they thrust with their *yari*, confronted and cut at each other, while the sound of the *tachi*'s *tsuba* [sword guards] clashing together, and the sound of enemies and allies meeting, was as if 100,000 thunderclaps were falling from the sky' (Suzuki 2001: 99). This specific idea of the sound generated when two sword guards struck each other is repeated for the siege of Tezutsuyama Castle in 1570, in which 'the allied side entered and one could hear the noise of the *tsuba*'; a face-to-face combat with swords might even be referred to as a '*tsuba* struggle' because the two sword guards could effectively lock together in the intense pressure of the close fighting (Suzuki 2001: 99). The description of the battle of Toriitōge in 1571 adds further idiomatic expressions, because the impact 'shaved off the ridges of the sword blades' and, rather than merely having the *tsuba* clashing together, the force on contact 'split the sword guards asunder' (Suzuki 2001: 100).

The *gunkimono* called *Sōshū heiran ki*, which was written by a retainer of the Hōjō family of Odawara, contains the following vivid description of the aftermath of a battle in 1590: ‘Soaked red in the grass of the field and kicked about by the hooves of the perspiring horses sweating blood, the common soldiers’ corpses were carried by the flow of the river and disappeared in a moment’ (quoted in Suzuki 2001: 98). This image of the anonymous victims of samurai weapons is very poignant, and whereas many similar lamentations appear in the diaries of civilian observers of Japanese warfare, it is unusual to find a description like this in any *gunkimono*. Normally the focus is on named heroes and their heroic deeds (and deaths), but *gunkimono* sometimes give away details of the painful personal reality of being killed or wounded, and one crucial factor in this was of course the defensive capability of the samurai’s suit of armour.

On the whole, traditional Japanese armour provided a good defence, but it contained a number of weak points that changed little over the centuries. First of all were the obvious gaps between the sections, particularly around the face. There were also the parts of the body that were not covered by anything made of metal or leather, such as the backs of the legs and the insides of the arms, and the areas defended only by mail or brigandine-like cloth and plate. The thickness of the metal used for the face mask, the *haidate* (thigh guards), *kote* (sleeves) and *suneate* (shinguards) was never as strong as the *dō* (body armour) and helmet, the design and materials of which became more resistant to penetration as the years went by.

The maximum effective range of an early Japanese arrow was unlikely to be more than about 20m, and the preferred distance for inflicting a wound or killing an opponent through hitting a weak point or finding a gap in his armour was little more than 10m. A direct arrow hit between the eyes that avoided the peak of a samurai’s helmet and any form of face mask he might be wearing, would of course be instantly fatal, but it was more common for samurai to die after sustaining multiple arrow hits. The well-known theme in Japanese prints showing wounded samurai pierced by numerous arrows and looking like a porcupine is therefore no great exaggeration. For example, it took 20 arrows to kill Imagawa Yorikuni, who served in the Nambokuchō Wars, (Conlan 2003: 59). In the *Azuma Kagami* account of the Jōkyū War of 1221, we read that one samurai was hit in the right eye but was able to send an arrow back in reply, while one of the great heroes of the 11th-century Gosannen War is even said to have received an arrow in his eye and then withdrew the same arrow and shot it back against the enemy! Bullets were of course more deadly and had a range twice that of arrows, so that helmet bowls and breastplates were made increasingly bullet-proof. There was, however, little protection against the heavier bullets of 100 *monme* (375g) or more.

Like arrows, a *yari* in trained hands would be aimed at the gaps in armour, and the momentum of a horse would add to the force of impact. There are several illustrations of mounted samurai impaling unfortunate *ashigaru* on the ends of their blades and lifting the

unfortunate victims into the air, although this may be artistic licence. As for striking weapons, a lucky hit delivered with some force from a *kanasaibō* could smash a helmet in one blow, but the normal result was a blunt impact. A hit to the torso might have stunned an opponent, while a strike to the legs could have temporarily disabled him, and both outcomes would allow a swordsman to finish him off (Sasama 1968: 517). The usefulness of hooked and side-bladed polearms was limited to a similar preliminary disabling through their pulling capacity, which could be deadly enough if the target was a horseman, but to inflict serious injury the shaft also had to bear a cutting or thrusting blade of some sort.

When death was avoided the receipt of an injury was regarded as proof that the fortunate warrior had been in the thick of the fighting, so *gunchūjō*, the petitions for reward presented to a higher authority by commanders in the field on behalf of the men serving under them, are a very valuable resource for studying the details of wounds resulting from attacks such as the aforementioned. An extremely interesting analysis of wounds based on *gunchūjō* data has been produced by Goble, whose work reveals some extraordinary survival stories. In one example he notes how two samurai were wounded twice: one on the right thigh and in the right armpit; the other on the head and right shoulder. Another samurai was wounded in three places (stomach, chest and right knee). One man suffered five wounds (forehead, left arm, right eyebrow, right hip and right thigh); one was wounded in seven places, and another in no fewer than 11 places (Goble 2005: 303).

Serious arrow injuries could lead to samurai dying lingering deaths or suffering the agony of having a barbed arrowhead withdrawn during field surgery, but the above figures suggest that minor flesh wounds caused little concern, a conclusion that is backed up by the *gunkimono*. For example, an arrow went clean through the middle finger of Beppu Michizane in 1343, but two days later the same chronicle places him back in the thick of the fighting. Four months later, however, the same Beppu Michizane was hit by an arrow in his foot, where his straw sandals offered no protection. The arrowhead could not be removed, so Michizane was forced to retire from active duty and for the rest of his military career he served only as a guard at fortresses (Conlan 2003: 59). A different account tells of another commander (who may have been the same Beppu Michizane) receiving an arrow through his ankle that could not be withdrawn, yet he went on directing his forces and survived so well that there is a record of him being thanked by the *shōgun* 17 years later (Goble 2005: 303).

Samurai could also survive severe spear wounds, as shown by an incident during the siege of Moji in 1561 when Ura Muneatsu was struck in the face by a *yari* the blade of which cut his cheek near his nose. Muneatsu maintained his composure and killed his opponent with one spear thrust of his own (Morimoto 1989: 18). Far more likely to be instantly fatal were the wounds caused by deep thrusts from a spear blade that damaged internal organs, or long slashes from a sword or *naginata*



that cut through muscles and blood vessels, but in truth death and injury could come by many means. On the Heiji Scroll we observe court ladies being trampled under horses' hooves, while the Gosannen War Scroll shows helmets being smashed by rocks and blood pouring out of large slash wounds. Bodies have been sliced into pieces and horses suffer just as much as humans.

Bullets added their own degree of horror, but even they were not instantly fatal unless the bullet was from one of the large-calibre *ōzutsu*. In 1560 Imagawa Yoshimoto (1519–60) attacked Oda Nobunaga's frontier fortress of Marune. The leader of the assault (no less a person than the future *shōgun* Tokugawa Ieyasu) poured in volleys of bullets, and one of the rounds may have been responsible for the death of Nobunaga's castle commander Sakuma Morishige. That was Sadler's interpretation of the original sources, which do not specifically state that Morishige was shot dead. If he was, then Morishige would have been the first named general to be felled by a *teppō* (Sadler 1937: 53; Kuwata & Utagawa 1976: 216).

Five years later, in 1565, we have a record of a Japanese bullet being stopped by a well-made European helmet. The incident was the little-known battle of Fukuda Bay, when Matsuura Takanobu of Hirado (1529–99), who was angry that the annual Portuguese vessel from Macao had not docked in his own harbour, sent a fleet of 80 ships to attack the ship as it lay at anchor. The Japanese opened fire with *teppō* and a bullet struck Captain-Major João Pereira on his helmet.

ABOVE LEFT

In this dramatic print a samurai wielding a polearm, presumably a *naginata* (although only the shaft of the weapon is shown), has succeeded in cutting clean through the sword of his dismounted opponent.

ABOVE RIGHT

A vignette from the Gosannen War Scroll showing the use of a *naginata* to display an impaled severed head.

Fortunately for Pereira his iron helmet was a special one made for just such an illustrious personage and was therefore bullet-proof (Matsuda 2000: 179–80).

More mundane examples of survivors of bullet wounds include Mizuno Tadashige (1541–1600) from the Tokugawa force at Yoshida Castle in 1575, who had his right elbow shattered by a bullet but continued to wield his *yari* in single combat using his left arm (Kuwata & Utagawa 1976: 72–73). At the battle of Imafuku in 1614 during the Winter Campaign of Osaka a samurai called Tomura Daigaku, who was fighting on foot with a *yari*, was met by a hail of enemy fire. Two arrows pierced his left arm and numerous bullets hit him in the side. He fell in unbearable pain, but even though he was stunned by the impact he rose to his feet and continued to advance, albeit unsteadily, towards the enemy while still tightly clutching his *yari*. In the end a fellow samurai had to drag him to safety, a task made more difficult because the delirious Daigaku would not release his grip on his *yari* (Izawa 1980: 81–83).

NEW WEAPONS AND SAMURAI CULTURE

Until the 15th century *kyūba no michi*, the ‘way of bow and horse’, was the most prized samurai accomplishment of all, and the faith that the early samurai placed in skills at archery is very well illustrated on the Heiji Scroll, where one man rushes into battle with his bow even though he is wearing no armour and has only a sword at his side. When spears began to replace bows as the weapons of choice cultural motifs developed around the spear as well, and the word ‘*yari*’ entered the vocabulary in expressions indicating samurai excellence. The best-known literary usage, of course, is the naming of the seven finest samurai at any particular battle of the Sengoku Period as the *shichi hon yari* (‘seven spears’). The Seven Spears of Shizugatake in 1583 included such names as Fukushima Masanori (1561–1624) and Katō Kiyomasa (1562–1611), both of whom would go on to forge distinguished careers. At the battle of Hachihama in 1582 a samurai called Kunitomo was named as one of its own Seven Spears, thus providing an upbeat note to a disastrous encounter in which Ukita Motoie (c.1562–82), Kunitomo’s commander, was killed by a stray bullet that may have come from his own side (Yuasa 1912: 320).

The term *yari* also appears in the expression *ichiban yari*, literally ‘the first spear’ but meaning the first samurai into battle. For example, Hattori Kazutada was to earn the distinction of *ichiban yari* during Oda Nobunaga’s surprise attack on Imagawa Yoshimoto at the battle of Okehazama in 1560. Kazutada was one of the first to break into Yoshimoto’s headquarters and also deployed the ‘first spear’ in a literal sense when he aimed his *yari* at the enemy commander. Yoshimoto grabbed the spear shaft and made a sword cut at Kazutada’s leg, but a second samurai by the name of Mōri Yoshikatsu seized Yoshimoto from behind and cut off his head.



Different weapons were not equally regarded in cultural terms, and a very good illustration of this is the contrast between the *gunkimono* and *gunchūjō* descriptions of the siege of Takiyama Castle in Bingo Province in 1552, which was conducted by Mōri Motonari (1497–1571) and his three sons on behalf of their overlord Ōuchi Yoshinaga (1532–57). Two *gunchūjō* were issued for the siege of Takiyama Castle. The shorter of the pair was submitted by Kikkawa Motoharu (1530–86) five days after the attack and contains the names of 19 injured men, of whom 12 are of samurai rank as indicated by their possession of a surname. The causes of their wounds are listed as one by a sword, nine from arrows, three from spears and six from stones (Dai Nihon a: 453–56). The longer *gunchūjō* was prepared by Motoharu's brother Mōri Takamoto (1523–63) and submitted to Yoshinaga with the date of 8m 28d (16 September). Takamoto's unit suffered seven deaths and had no fewer than 156 wounded men. The missile casualties among them are divided into 93 arrow wounds and 26 stone wounds, with two unfortunates being hit by both arrows and stones (Dai Nihon b: 305–19). In each document

ABOVE LEFT

This print shows the classic image of a mounted samurai archer from about the time of the Gempei War. He is dressed in *yoroi* armour and carries his bow in his left hand. A full quiver of arrows hangs from his belt along with a wooden reel containing a spare bowstring.

ABOVE RIGHT

Katō Kiyomasa was one of the most loyal followers of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, fighting at the battle of Shizugatake in 1583 and leading part of the invasion of Korea in 1592. His weapon of choice is a *kata-kami yari* that is fitted with a half-cross blade in the shape of a sickle.

teppō wounds are conspicuous by their absence, which is fully understandable at this early date, for a minor castle owner who is unlikely to have acquired arquebuses.

The account of the battle in *Intoku Taiheiki*, the Mōri family's *gunkimono*, is very different in tone from the two *gunchūjō*. *Intoku Taiheiki* is conventionally heroic in its description of the fighting, although its account of the siege of Takiyama Castle is surprisingly brief and notes that the garrison amounted to only 380 men, against whom the Mōri brought an overwhelming force of 3,800 and performed many brave deeds. The names of the 12 wounded samurai listed in the *gunchūjō* submitted by Kikkawa Motoharu are repeated in *Intoku Taiheiki*, but when it comes to the causes of their wounds only arrows and spears are mentioned; there is no reference to stones anywhere in the account (*Intoku Taiheiki* 548). This suggests that to mention suffering an injury from a thrown stone may have been acceptable in an internal document intended to gain immediate reward, but when it came to recording one's brave exploits for posterity it would appear that wounds from proper weapons were more desirable!

NEW WEAPONS AND JAPANESE WARFARE

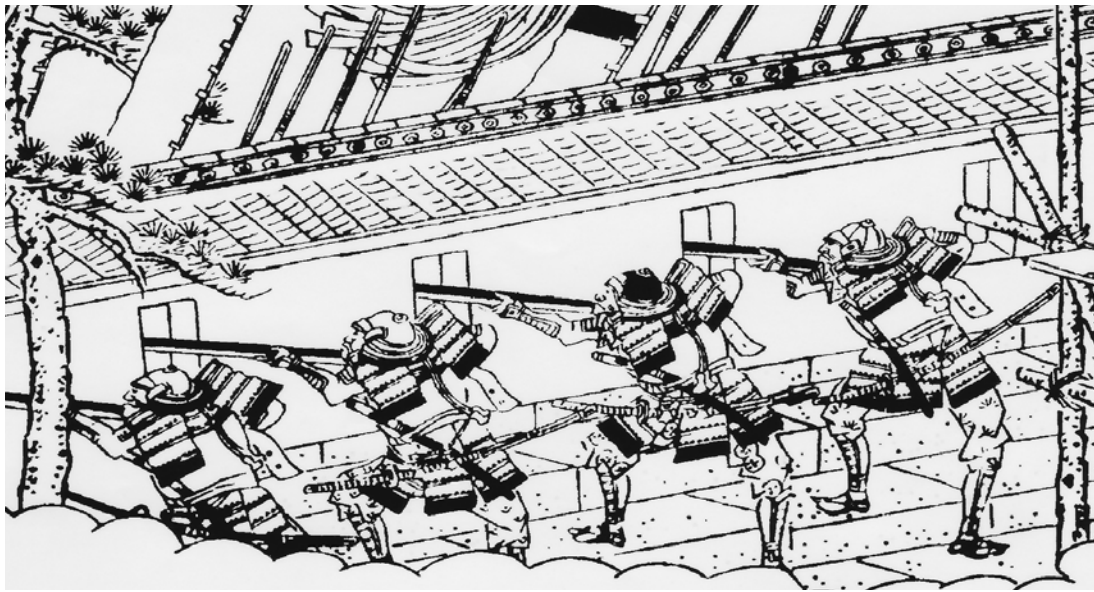
The impact of innovative weapons on Japanese warfare was much less significant than is commonly believed. Conlan's extensive comparative analysis from *gunchūjō* shows that arrows inflicted 99 per cent of all missile wounds during the 14th century, the rest being caused by the humble stones (Conlan 2010: 130–31). Arrows continued to cause 58 per cent of all missile wounds until 1600, by which time arquebuses had finally come into their own and were causing 80 per cent of projectile wounds. These figures suggest that even though arquebuses are conventionally regarded as having revolutionized Japanese warfare, *yumi* continued to dominate the battlefield for many years after the appearance of firearms.

A very good example of the way that the mere possession of the new weapons was not enough to change warfare is provided by Takeda Shingen (1521–73). His name was linked to arquebuses for the first time in 1555 when he reinforced Asahiya Castle with 3,000 men including 800 bows and 300 *teppō*. He may well have used *teppō* at the fourth battle of Kawanakajima in 1561, but as the whole action pivoted around a series of surprise attacks in open positions they could not have been easy to deploy in any decisive manner.

Shingen certainly had no doubts about the effect of arquebus fire from a defensible position, because there is an account in *Minowa Gunki* of the siege of Minowa Castle in 1566 where 'Over one hundred of the best shots were firing from inside the castle with about sixty horsemen in support, the *teppō ashigaru* kept up a continuous fire of bullets, resulting in over six or seven hundred wounded and dead' (Sasama 1969: 64), but in the outlying Takeda territories there seem to have been some supply

A very good example of a *jūmonji yari* on display in Ōgaki Castle. This cross-bladed type of spear allowed a samurai to pull his victim towards him.





problems concerning firearms for a few more years. In November 1569 Shingen wrote to a castle commander in Shinano called Ichikawa Shinrokurō. In the letter, Shingen confronted his subordinate's problem of a shortage both of firearms and men trained to use them: 'because bows and *teppō* are important, it may even be necessary to reduce the number of men wielding long spears and hand spears. There is a lack of knowledge about *teppō*, so we must prepare for this, choosing those who have the ability to use gunpowder and those with the skills to handle *teppō*' (quoted in Murase 2017: 188).

This passage is not an order to replace spears with firearms; rather, it is concerned with the retraining of selected spearmen in gunnery because of the shortage of able operators. It is also noteworthy that the highly skilled archers were deemed to be too valuable to be required to give up their own weapons in exchange for firearms. By 1573 Takeda Shingen seems to have solved his problems of supply, although we look in vain for any record of the decisive use of firearms at the battle of Mikata ga Hara. The sole mention of them in the *Mikawa Gofudo ki* account of the battle fits into 12 written characters, and even then they are juxtaposed with bows. By comparison, the use of thrown stones takes up six times the space, and the *Shinchō-Kō ki* account of the battle (Kuwata 1965: 129–30) makes no mention of firearms at all.

Mōri Motonari, the great *daimyō* of the Inland Sea area whose siege of Takiyama Castle involved no firearms at all, seems to have embraced them by 1555, because of an order to his retainers to collect urine-soaked soil from stable floors to be used in the making of saltpetre (Wada 2001: 196). Yet arquebuses still cannot have been widely dispersed within the Mōri territories because *Intoku Taiheiki* relates that when the Amako were attacking the Mōri possession of Fukumitsu Castle in 1561 the defenders had one solitary *teppō* inside the walls. The

Taking careful aim through loopholes, a group of samurai defend a castle using long-barrelled heavy-calibre *teppō*. Until the battle of Nagashino in 1575, firearms were used effectively only from or against fortified positions.

weapon was, however, used by a sharpshooter to kill a leader of the attackers, thereby relieving the garrison's distress (Suzuki 2000a: 61). The Mōri came under fire again in 1563 when Matsuyama Castle in Buzen Province was attacked by the Ōtomo. Four men under the command of the defending general Sugi Matsuchiyo were wounded. Three of them had arrow wounds, while the remaining man, whose name is given as Hara Rokurō, suffered what is probably the first arquebus wound to be documented in a *gunchūjō* for a named individual (Suzuki 2000a: 45). Two years later, in 1565, a further *gunchūjō* for an Ōtomo battle lists eight arquebus wounds compared to only three arrow wounds. The parts of the victims' bodies hit by bullets are given as three to an arm, two to the abdomen, two to knees and one to the left leg (Udagawa 2013: 40).

Finally, the *gunchūjō* for the Mōri siege of Shiraga Castle in 1563 names five dead men and 44 wounded, of which 33 are from *teppō*, six from arrows and four from stones. In addition, one man suffered a sword wound on his left hand during hand-to-hand fighting and received a stone wound to his head (Suzuki 2000a: 188). On a point of detail, an undated reference in the Mōri archives to the existence of *teppō chūkan* (middlings: i.e. soldiers of intermediate rank) tempts one to see them as members of an organized arquebus-equipped unit (Murase 2017: 188). The weapons and the men are mentioned separately, however, so the undated reference may mean no more than samurai who could handle firearms well. Firearms may have been well established in the Mōri armoury by that time, but any equivalent progress in terms of army organization was still some way off.

MIXED WEAPON COMBAT

Heike Monogatari naturally tends to emphasize the effects of a well-judged arrow loosed by a skilled mounted archer during the Gempei War, but the descriptions of fighting in even that classic *gunkimono* normally include a blend of techniques and weaponry, and as time goes by a similar combination of arms is encountered more and more. By the end of the Sengoku Period few encounters involve anything other than a mix of weapons, and in the often-chaotic situation of a late Sengoku Period battlefield a suitable victim would be selected in a fleeting moment. An exchange then followed, no privacy being permitted for single combat because others were probably after the same prize and would even neglect comrades in peril to achieve their own aims – and of course all this took place against a background of volleys of bullets and arrows from the *ashigaru* weapon squads.

An excellent example that sums up this scenario is provided by the experience of Ikoma Toshitoyo (1575–1670) at the battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Toshitoyo's unusual longevity (he died at the age of 95) can have been in no way impaired by the dash he showed at Sekigahara, where he served under Fukushima Masanori and was therefore involved



right at the start of Japan's most famous battle. His account of Sekigahara, contained in a letter written within a few years of the battle, involves elements of self-glorification and consequent exaggeration that resemble a *gunkimono*, but the sequence of events and its revelation of his remorseless opportunism in the quest for personal glory has the ring of truth about it.

Ikoma Toshitoyo's experience at Sekigahara may be reconstructed as follows. It commences with a fierce exchange of arquebus fire between the rival units under Fukushima Masanori and Ukita Hideie (1573–1655). There is no mention of any casualties from the bullets fired, which may simply indicate that Toshitoyo has chosen to ignore them; and while his contingent advance on foot Toshitoyo, who has also dismounted, calculates that the enemy vanguard are about 100m away. He notes with interest that the officer in charge of the arquebusiers is wearing a *sashimono* of a golden fan on the back of his armour. The man is descending the hill and gives orders for the arquebuses to be fired again. Having done so, he withdraws to the area to which about half of their vanguard have just descended. Toshitoyo judges that this enemy unit can be overcome, so he re-mounts his horse and rides forward, and at this point the man with the fan *sashimono* catches his eye again. Realizing that he must be a senior commander of some sort, Toshitoyo immediately begins to think of his own desire for personal glory.

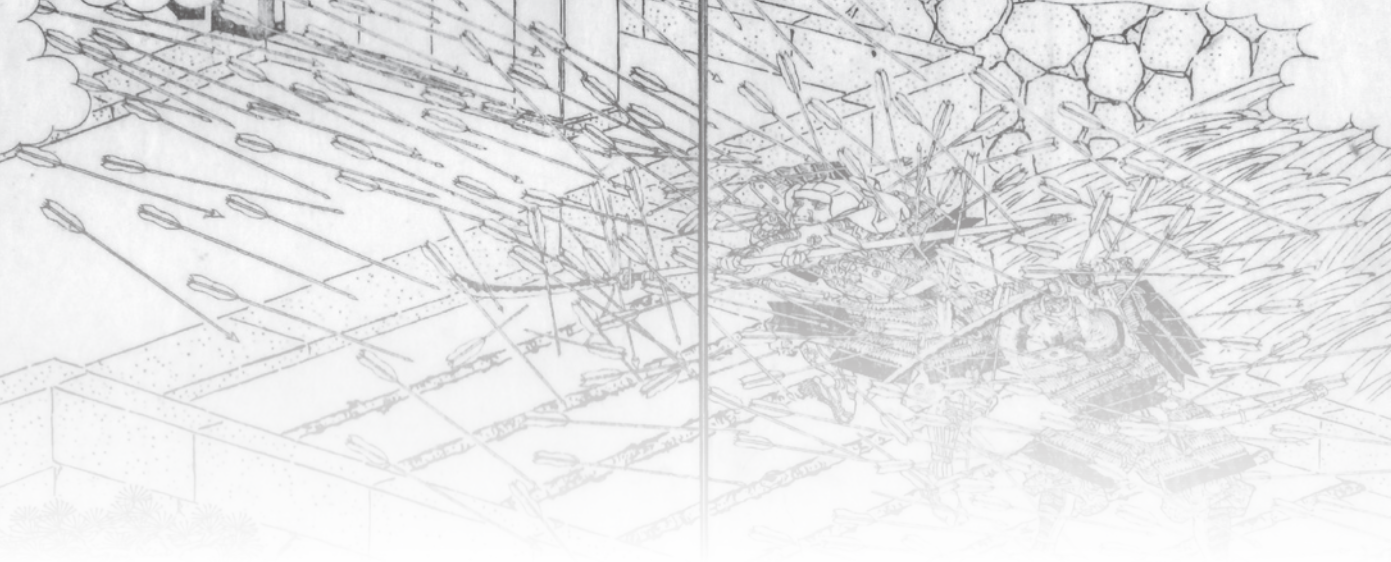
Many details of individual combat using a mixture weapons appear on the painted screen of the battle of Kawanakajima on display inside the battlefield museum. One mounted samurai spears a fleeing *ashigaru*. In the centre a *naginata* blade clashes with a *jūmonji yari*. Behind the *naginata* man a swordsman is dragged backwards by a tug from another *naginata* blade.

Toshitoyo charges in from the enemy flank and jumps down from his horse when he and his intended victim are about 4m apart. Realizing that Toshitoyo is about to attack him as the gap between them decreases, the man with the fan *sashimono* entrusts his defence to his comrades, who turn to protect him. From their ranks a ‘naked man’ (i.e. someone who is not wearing armour) draws his sword and advances to challenge Toshitoyo, who uses his spear to knock the man down. Untroubled by the assailant Toshitoyo advances two or three steps further on, but his comrade Kosaka Sukeroku, who has ridden up and is now on his left side, is attacked by another enemy samurai who thrusts at him with a spear and causes him to fall from his horse. This enemy samurai ignores the fallen Sukeroku because he has come to fight Toshitoyo instead. Toshitoyo accepts the challenge, knocks the man from his horse with his spear and kills him. The dead man turns out to be another of Ukita Hideie’s officers.

Seeing Sukeroku fall from his horse, another of Toshitoyo’s comrades dismounts to help him. Meanwhile a further samurai from Masanori’s army has attacked the man with the fan *sashimono*, whom he kills in front of his commander. Another friendly samurai, Okudaira Tōbei, is thrust at by an enemy spear and dies instantly. Kobayashi Daigaku then unhorses an enemy using his spear but other enemies ride up and knock him off his horse in turn. Daigaku descends a few metres down the hill, and the enemy head that he has taken is seized by the opposing side. The rivals then separate (Shiramine 2014: 49–64).

The above passage is a very good account of spear fighting from horseback against mounted and dismounted samurai armed also with spears or swords. Note how the horsemen support each other, whereby the emphasis seems to be on first forcing one’s opponent from his horse and then finishing him off on the ground. Because of the *mêlée* the enemy arquebusiers are unable to fire in support, unlike our final illustration of mixed weapon combat, which begins with swords and ends in gunfire.

The incident happened during the siege of Ueda in 1600, when the noted swordsman Mikogami Tenzen saw an enemy samurai approaching from the besieged castle, waving a spear and shouting what appeared to be a challenge. The curious Tenzen responded to the shout by heading over the line towards the challenger, closely followed by another samurai called Tsuji Tarōnosuke, and discovered two other enemy soldiers who were obviously on a reconnaissance mission. The way they couched their weapons when they saw Tenzen also convinced him that the two were good swordsmen. Sensing the opportunity of a rare occasion on which to display his skill with the blade, Tenzen drew his sword and two individual combats therefore began. Tenzen skilfully parried the spear strokes of his samurai opponent, but the man’s heavy armour required four blows from Tenzen’s sword. Tarōnosuke, his comrade-in-arms, cut through the spear of his own adversary, whose nerve then cracked. He turned and fled, so the frustrated Tarōnosuke contented himself with delivering a bad-tempered stroke to the already prostrate body of Tenzen’s foe. Tenzen and Tarōnosuke then withdrew to their lines under a barrage of arquebus fire, their samurai duty done (Rogers 1990: 443–44).



CONCLUSION

Problems of interpretation concerning the effect on Japanese warfare of the samurai's weapons have long existed, and they have sometimes been made worse by the political bias of the commentator. For example, when the Imperial Japanese Army was fighting in China and Korea during the Meiji Period (1868–1912), much emphasis was laid on citing any historical evidence which supported the idea that the Japanese had always preferred close combat to ranged weaponry. This, it was hoped, would spur on the young conscripts to undertake death-defying 'Banzai' charges against modern firearms in the name of the Emperor. This book has argued to the contrary that the use of samurai weapons has always involved a mixture of armaments and techniques, a suggestion that is by no means new, because the same opinion was expressed in a very matter-of-fact manner towards the end of the Sengoku Period. The relevant passage appears in *Heihō Okugishō*, a treatise on the Japanese martial arts attributed to Yamamoto Kansuke, who was killed at the battle of Kawanakajima in 1561. Kansuke comments that for long-distance fighting bows and arrows and guns were most useful. For more close-quarter fighting, spears and polearms were best. When the fighting was hand-to-hand, short swords were best (Obata 1994: 5–6).

Yamamoto Kansuke, who was noted for his strategic skills, has very little to say about the samurai ideal of single combat – a cherished mode of behaviour that could threaten any commander's carefully laid plans – and the most authentic accounts of samurai battles throughout history show most protagonists to be similarly pragmatic. Sometimes distance weapons predominated, at other times close-quarter combat was needed. For example, missile weapons would break the charge at Nagashino and could clear castle walls in Korea, but hand-to-hand combat inevitably followed both those scenarios. The most important trends in Japanese warfare between the 10th and the 16th centuries were therefore not the introduction of new weapons but the deployment of larger and larger armies and a complementary development of military organization. New

A massive hail of arrows greets the assault party moving against Akasaka Castle during the Nambokuchō Wars. This was the reality of the large-scale battlefield use of the weapons of the samurai.

weapons were of course introduced, but the older weapons were never completely eliminated apart from the short-lived Chinese-style firearms. Instead there was a progressive integration of the new weapons into the samurai's 'toolkit', with decisions about their use being made based on their effectiveness for the particular situation at hand. Mere innovation or even the rediscovery of an older weapon such as the straight spear was never enough; the new items had to be used efficiently and successfully, and that usually meant changes in army organization.

There are two good illustrations of this. The first is the use of the samurai spearmen in organized defensible groups by Hatakeyama Masanaga during the Ōnin War, which was a radical change from the mixed-group style of fighting. The second is the failure by the Negoroji monks to capitalize on their early adoption of arquebuses. By the mid-16th century the Negoroji monks were so confident of their own security that they could afford to hire themselves out as mercenaries, and in 1562 their arquebuses bagged a major scalp at the battle of Kumeda when they attacked Miyoshi Jikkyū from the rear. On hearing the sound of gunfire Jikkyū led his Horse Guards against the monks, who promptly shot him dead (Sugiyama 1974: 210). From that moment on the Negoroji monks went from strength to strength, and the greatest compliment to their skills was paid by Oda Nobunaga, the man who is usually credited with the insight into the large-scale use of firearms. That would happen in 1575, but five years before Nagashino Nobunaga had to rely on firearms being supplied on his behalf by the Negoroji monks. In that year Nobunaga was in arms against the Miyoshi's forts of Noda and Fukushima, which were defended by 8,000 men. The *Shinchō-Kō ki* account of the battles is very revealing because of the contrast the author makes between Nobunaga's own arsenal and the contribution he received from Negoroji:

An army from Negoro, Saika, Yukawa and the inner districts of Kii Province, some 20,000 strong, came to Nobunaga's assistance and set up their lines at Uryūno, Sumiyoshi and Tennōji. They were said to have 3,000 arquebuses. They participated in the daily attacks. The thunder from the friendly and the enemy guns made heaven and earth shake night and day. (Kuwata 1965: 110)

Negoroji lacked the ability to mobilize, sustain and supply its armies, however, and when a series of attacks were made against it, culminating in Hideyoshi's campaign of 1585, Japan's great innovators in firearms use were swept aside. Organization and the combination of arms was always the key to success, a realization that was given a surprising endorsement in 1645 by the man who is commonly regarded as the supreme publicist for, and exponent of, the *katana*: Japan's most celebrated lone swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi. In his *Gorinshō* (The Book of Five Rings), Musashi noted that the context determined the choice of weapons. While the *wakizashi* was particularly appropriate in close-quarter fighting, the *katana* was effective in all situations; the *naginata*, being a defensive weapon, was less effective than the spear in battle (Watanabe 2010: 73). This was always the reality behind the deployment in battle of the weapons of the samurai.

OPPOSITE

A recurrent theme in samurai tradition is the alleged use of a *katana* or a *naginata* to cut through arrows being fired at a samurai. Here a warrior does just that. Note the precise position of his hands on his sword hilt as he turns against the oncoming shafts.

太平記英勇傳

米藤右兵衛大夫勝興

濃守義勝が長男濃州の國主
 一年太多春永當國小軍馬と
 諸臣又智勇を盡く攻撃をたに
 西美濃の三人衆と稱し米藤家の手
 心の如くし氏井安當稻座の人々
 春永の旗下ふ降ぬ猶此外の面々も
 以降参又ハ陣没支戰者更にハ新
 春永の臣下ふ奇計と施者あて手勢
 率て米藤家の本城稻葉山の向
 迎ふ登り桐手より忍び二三之れを
 攻落るれ防戰争叶ふべき城を閉て退去
 越前ふ至り幾久良家に
 良客より義無も春永
 爲ふか振山ふ敗軍一合ハ斯く見え
 勝興心ふ思ひくハ此國を立退て又
 何國ふ飄泊せんう然死と潔くせんふハ主從
 僞十余人氏井左京亮が三百余人の中切て入
 三度四五度追戻し身も鎧石あつたれが
 御手淺手数々所蒙り今ハ早是をせんと
 堀脱捨腹極切ハ從者も各指違々々
 土從共ふか振山の初冬の落葉と散失う

一家略傳史

柳下亭種員記



GLOSSARY

ASHIGARU	foot soldier	MOCHI-ZUTSU	samurai's arquebus
BŌ	club	MONME	measure of weight equivalent to 3.75g
CHŌ	a distance of 109m	MONOMI NO YARI	'scout's spear': a short spear
CHŪKAN	soldiers of intermediate rank	NAGAMAKI	long sword having a long handle
DAIMYŌ	feudal lord	NAGA-YARI	long spear
DŌ	body armour	NAGA E-YARI	very long-shafted spear
EBIRA	basket-like quiver	NAGINATA	glaiive
FUETSU	axe	NOBUSHI	skirmishers
GOKENIN	land owning warrior	NODACHI	extra-long sword
GUNCHŪJŌ	battle report	NOMINE	heavy steel arrowhead
GUNKIMONO	war tale	ŌDACHI	extra-long sword
GUSUKU	Okinawan castle	ŌDEPPŌ	very large-calibre arquebus
HAIDATE	thigh armour	ŌKUMADE	large rake
HATAMOTO	<i>daimyō's</i> guardsman	ŌMASAKARI	large axe
HEITSUI	mallet	ŌNAGINATA	large <i>naginata</i>
HIHŌ HISŌ	fire spear	ONO	axe
HIYA	Okinawan firearm	ŌZUTSU	large-calibre arquebus
HIYA	fire arrow	SASHIMONO	identifying device
HOKO	socketed spear	SHAKU	length of 30.3cm
ICHIBAN YARI	first into battle	SŌHEI	warrior monk
IKIZU	shot wound	SUN	length of 3.03cm
IKKI UCHI	single mounted warrior combat	SUNEATE	shinguards
ISHIKIZU	stone wound	TACHI	slung sword
ISHIYUMI	stone-dropping device	TANTŌ	dagger
ISSOKU	measurement of one hand's span	TEIKŌ	polearm with a sickle-like blade
JIZAMURAI	part-time warrior/farmers	TEPPŌ	arquebus
JŪMONJI YARI	cross-bladed spear	TSUBA	sword guard
KABURA YA	signalling arrow	TSUBATSUKI-NAGINATA	<i>naginata</i> with a sword guard
KAMI	god or deity	TSUKUBŌ	'sleeve entangler'; a police weapon
KANABŌ	wood-and-iron club	TSURUHASHI	pickaxe, possibly a weapon
KANASAIBŌ	wood-and-iron club	UCHINE	throwing arrow
KARIMATA	small scissors-type arrowhead	UTSUBO	enclosed quiver
KATA-KAMI-YARI	side-bladed spearhead	WAKIZASHI	short sword
KATANA	sword	WAKŌ	Japanese pirate gangs
KIKUCHI-YARI	improvised spear made from a dagger	WATAKURI	barbed arrowhead
KOKUJIN	small landowner	YA AWASE	arrow duel
KONAGINATA	short <i>naginata</i>	YABUSAME	martial art of mounted archery
KOTE	sleeve armour	YA IKUSA	arrow warfare
KUMADE	rake	YANABA	arrowhead
MAKINO	a short penetrating arrowhead	YARI	spear
MASAKARI	axe	YOROI	classic box-like armour
MITSU BUSE	three fingers'-width	YUMI	bow
MOCHI-YARI	samurai's spear		

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Some of the painted scrolls and screens referred to in this book may now be examined in their entirety on the internet owing to the generosity to researchers exercised by certain Japanese museums and libraries, and the list is growing. At the time of writing several examples including the Gosannen War Scroll are available through Japan's e-museum project at <http://www.emuseum.jp/>, which can be searched in English for new additions. *Heiji monogatari emaki* may be examined in detail at <http://learn.bowdoin.edu/heijiscroll/viewer.html>. The first two scrolls of *Jūnirui kassen emaki* (Twelve Animals' War Scroll) that show the battles are at <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2590869?tocOpened=1> and <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2590870?tocOpened=1>. A different version is owned by New York Public Library and can be accessed at <https://digitalcollections.nysl.org/collections/juni-rui-kassen-emaki/#/?tab=about>.

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A mounted samurai in the service of Sakuma Morimasa prepares to ride out beyond the protection of wooden shields against Hideyoshi's army. He is armed with a very long *kanasabō*, the heavy wood-and-iron club of octagonal cross-section that could deliver a crushing blow.

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OSPREY PUBLISHING

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
Kemp House, Chawley Park, Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9PH, UK
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland
1385 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10018, USA
E-mail: info@ospreypublishing.com
www.ospreypublishing.com

OSPREY is a trademark of Osprey Publishing Ltd

First published in Great Britain in 2021
This electronic edition published in 2021 by Bloomsbury
Publishing Plc

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: PB 9781472844040; eBook 9781472844057;
ePDF 9781472844026; XML 9781472844033

Index by Rob Munro
Typeset by PDQ Digital Media Solutions, Bungay, UK

Osprey Publishing supports the Woodland Trust, the UK's leading woodland conservation charity.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to Graham, Philippa and Ozzie Wilson.

Author's note

The weapons of the samurai were many and varied and consisted of far more than the archetypal 'samurai sword', which I covered in my book *Katana: The Samurai Sword* (Turnbull 2010). This work focuses on the samurai's other weapons – spears, bows, firearms, etc. – and how they were used by individual warriors rather than their deployment within the organized weapon squads described in my book *Samurai vs Ashigaru* (Turnbull 2019). I am delighted to have been able to include many new examples of these weapons' deployment both in written and pictorial form along with a few familiar yet essential accounts of samurai weapons in action. All the translations from Japanese sources are my own, except when noted.

In terms of style, Japanese names are given in the conventional form of family/clan name first, personal name second, e.g. Toyotomi Hideyoshi not Hideyoshi Toyotomi. Note, however, that the personal name is normally used as the identifier in a textual narrative. So, for example, 'Hideyoshi ordered an attack', not 'Toyotomi ordered an attack'. Measurements of length, which appear in the sources in *shaku* and *sun*, are given also in the metric system. For the convenience of readers who are used to the imperial system, one *shaku* is 11.93in (30.3cm) and one *sun* is one-tenth of one *shaku*.

All the photographs that appear in this book are from 'Japan Archive': my own picture library.

Front cover, above: A *yari* (spear).

Front cover, below: In spite of its predominant use as a weapon to fire volleys from disciplined *ashigaru* squads, the *teppō* could also be regarded as a suitable weapon for an individual samurai, as shown by this ornate example. Many were presented as gifts and used for hunting. There is also one account of a single combat using a *teppō*.

Title-page illustration: Chōsokabe Motochika (1539–99) was a prominent *daimyō* of the Sengoku Period. This statue, which stands near the site of his castle on the island of Shikoku, shows him holding a typical samurai's *mochi-yari*.